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BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING MILITARY MONTHLY

BRITAIN AT WAR

ISSUE

195



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unsung
confidante**

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man who brought
news of war?

Korea the final hours

How Commonwealth troops endured
China's gruelling last-ditch assault

**"You call this
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From the Editor

Brigadier Douglas Kendrew, Major-General Mike West, Lieutenant-Colonel George Larkin and Brigadier John Wilton visit the front on the morning of the Korean armistice PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM



Have you ever considered what it takes to be a general? There is a mindset; a good field officer balances aggression with caution, requires knowledge of the necessary functions of command, and combines that, skill and instinct, with bankable intelligence to devise plans that can be enacted by subordinates. The victors have garnered much of the attention in the history books – after all, it is their deliberate planning, decision making at critical junctures

and ability to identify advantages, that may turn the tide of battle.

However, consider that the generals in the field might never have been in the position to make choices if it were not for their counterparts in staff roles: calculated administrators ensuring there is something to fight with. For some, their reach, by necessity, extended into politics and, as revealed in Andrew Sangster's article, this was absolutely the case for Hastings Ismay. This unsung British general, equipped with just limited warfighting experience and a stint in military intelligence, came to hold perhaps the most important staff role of World War Two: Churchill's advisor and confidant.

This month, 70 years ago, the Korean Armistice took hold. However, the fighting continued right up to the very end. Michael

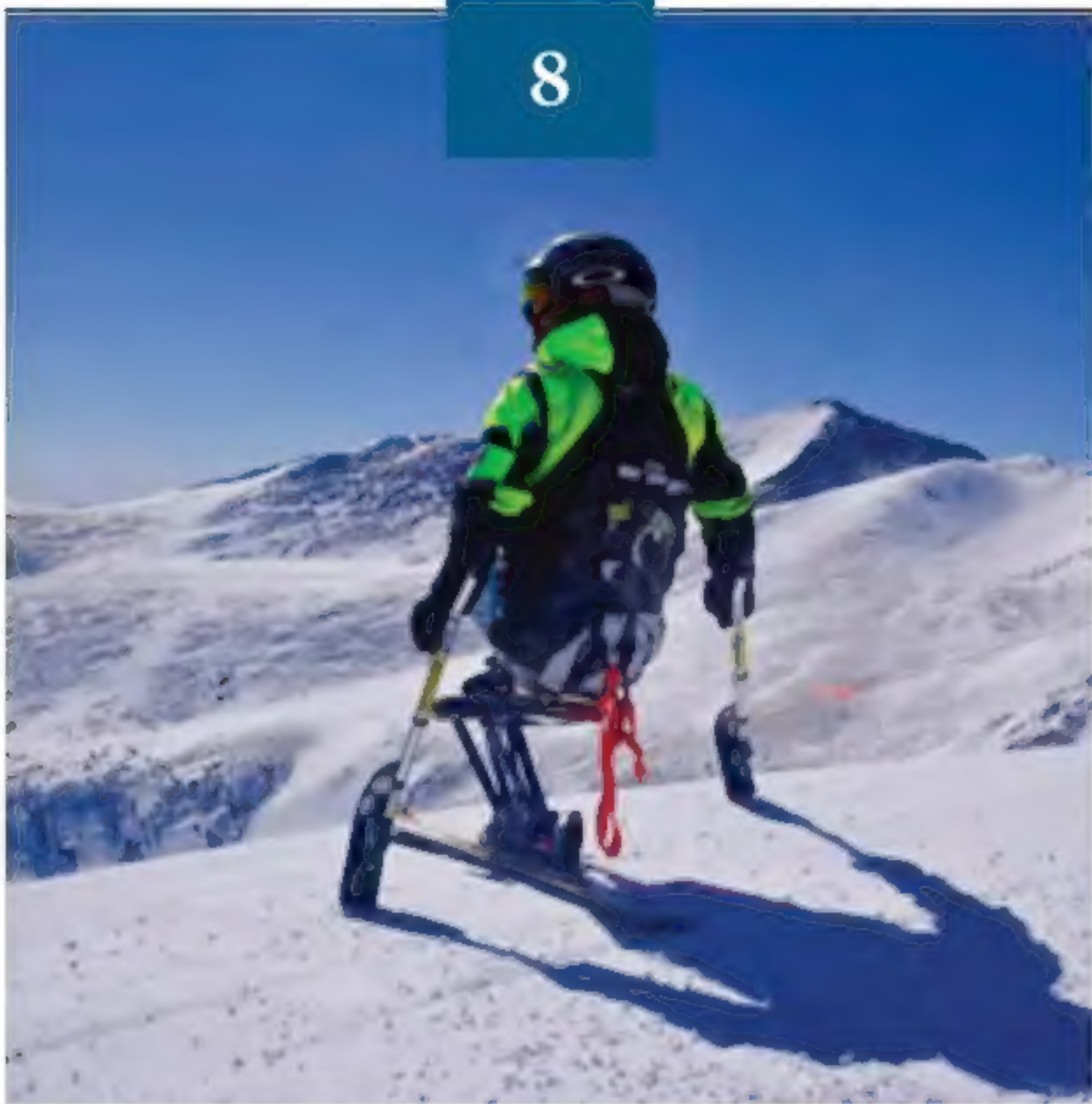
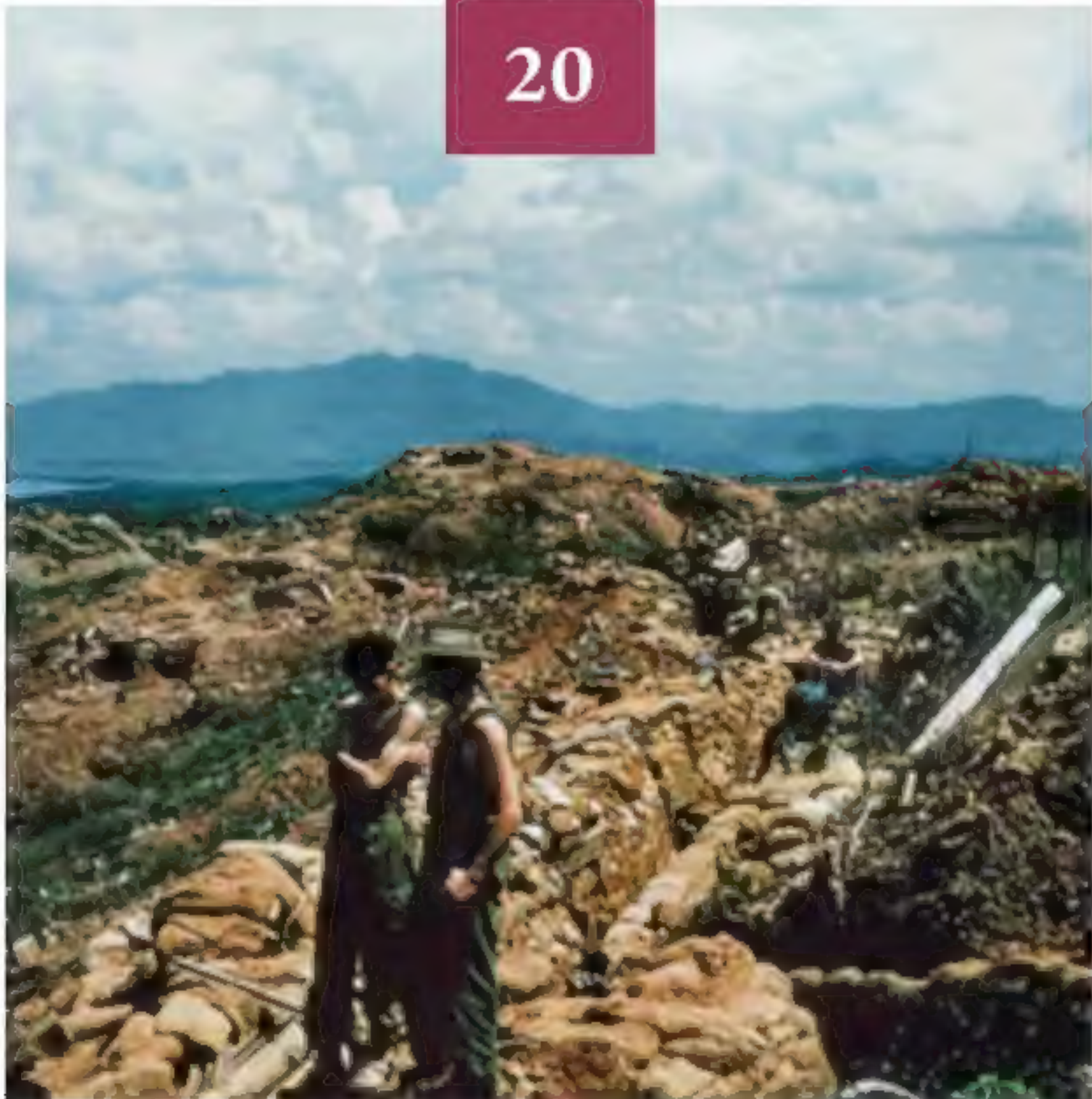
Kelly examines the desperate action around the Samichon River, where a combined Commonwealth and US Marine force clung to their positions as the Chinese tried to evict them. The battle, which broke out on July 24, 1953, and continued to within hours of the June 27 armistice, proved a bloody final episode.

You can also find out why the British Army would arrest Indiana Jones – or Nathan Drake, for you younger readers, in our feature on the work of Commander Roger Curtis and his modern day 'Monuments Men'.

If, like us, you have a penchant for the bizarre, we have a trio of articles to satisfy that desire. John Smith relates how an advert for a world-famous thirst-quencher – that Irish one you have to wait for – inspired the insignia of a British tank brigade as it advanced up Italy, and Christopher Joll explores the origins of an age-old military tradition that you may have spotted during the recent coronation, and wondered just who, or what, a 'Gold Stick' is.

Finally, when Craig Moore dropped in on the Royal Botanic Gardens for a spot of myth-busting regarding the extraordinary Barnes Wallis, he ended up harvesting details about the green shoots of resistance that sprouted at Kew. It's all bombs and botany as Kew's green-fingered specialists shifted their crocus (sorry...) to the war effort. It's an article I found deeply fascinating, I hope you will too.

John Ash, Editor



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Image: AWM

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FAA 'top gun' who flew 40 types dies

Rear-Admiral Ray Rawbone, who led a Fleet Air Arm squadron during the Suez Crisis and flew the Royal Navy's first operational jet, has died aged 99. During his long service career, he commanded several ships and flew more than 40 aircraft types, including every variant of Seafire.

Born in Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, on April 19, 1923, Rawbone volunteered for the Fleet Air Arm in 1941. His initial training was completed under the supervision of Ted Briggs, one of only three men to survive the sinking of HMS *Hood* earlier that year. Rawbone learned to fly at Elmdon (now Birmingham Airport) and in Canada.

By 1943, he had been posted to 809 Naval Air Squadron and the escort carrier HMS *Stalker*, flying

the Seafire Mk.IIc. After a tenure supporting operations in the Atlantic, he was loaned to 208 Squadron RAF and sent to Italy in May 1944. In August, he and his squadron flew ground attack sorties supporting Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France. However, on August 24, as he dived to strafe a German staff car, Rawbone was shot down by flak and only narrowly

escaped his aircraft. He remained with 809 Squadron until 1945, seeing further combat in Greece, Burma, Sumatra and Malaya.

Post-war, he became a senior instructor at the RAF Central Flying School, being awarded the AFC in 1951. Subsequently commanding 736 NAS, then a FAA training squadron, he was the first operational pilot to fly the Royal Navy's earliest jet, the

Supermarine Attacker, taking off from HMS *Eagle*. By 1956, he was leading 897 NAS, flying Sea Hawks from the same carrier during the Suez Crisis. He recalled: "Most of the targets were so lightly defended that one almost felt guilty strafing them with bullets and rockets."

After the conflict, he held a number of senior appointments, including command of carrier HMS *Ark Royal*, the destroyer *Kent* and the frigates *Dido* and *Loch Killisport*. In 1973, he was promoted to rear-admiral and was posted to the NATO HQ from 1974-1976.

Rear-Admiral Ray Rawbone is survived by his wife, Iris, and their daughter. He is pre-deceased by his son.



Lieutenant-Commander Ray Rawbone (centre), CO of 897 NAS, with lieutenant Lin Middleton (left) and Lieutenant-Commander Keith Leppard in October 1956
A RAWBONE VIA B CULL

New memorial marks Battle of the Atlantic

Royal Navy and aligned warships and guests of honour including HRH Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, have come together in Liverpool to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic.

Led by HMS *Defender*,

warships began arriving at the Liverpool waterfront on May 26 for three days of events. Joining the British destroyer on the prime berth of the Cruise Liner Terminal were the FS *Bretagne*, USS *Ramage* and the THV *Patricia*.

The weekend began with a private service of commemoration at the Church of Our Lady and Saint Nicholas at the Pier Head, with the Princess Royal and First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Ben Key, among those to acknowledge

and pay tribute to the sacrifices of the thousands of British and Allied sailors. After the service, The Princess Royal unveiled a Battle of the Atlantic Memorial and Garden of Reflection in the grounds of the church. Later, sailors joined in commemorative events held ashore and historic aircraft completed flypasts of the Royal Liver Building.

Speaking after the ceremony Commodore Phil Waterhouse, regional RN commander for Northern England said: "This will probably be our final chance to say thank you to that wonderful wartime generation who fought the battle – serving in the ships, in the docks, in the shipyards, in the homes."



Battle of the Atlantic Memorial unveiled by HRH The Princess Royal at St Nicholas Church, Liverpool

500lb'er disrupts HS2 works

A World War Two bomb was disposed of in a controlled explosion by British Army EOD specialists in May, following its discovery by contractors working on a site for the HS2 high-speed railway line project in Warwickshire.

Police were called to an area of Cubbington Wood, near Leamington Spa, on May 19, after excavation unearthed the device. Four nearby residences needed to be evacuated and a local primary school was notified before the site was cordoned off.

Identified as a Luftwaffe SC250 bomb, the munition was dealt with the same day, a spokesperson for HS2 Ltd confirmed: "The EOD team attached to the British Army successfully carried out a controlled explosion of a World War Two bomb. To

keep everyone safe, excavation work has been paused on the site while UXO specialist company Zetica carries out further surveys".

A contractor added that the metre-long bomb is thought to be to be the largest found on a HS2 construction site to date.

The International Bomber Command Centre has installed a new tribute to the Dambusters. The silhouettes of the 53 airmen killed during Operation Chastise were unveiled to mark the 80th anniversary of the raid at the IBCC's InSpire event, as part of a memorial service for dambuster Squadron Leader George 'Johnny' Johnson MBE DFM, who died in December. The designs are based on the crew of ED887, AJ-A,

who breached the Möhne but were shot down off Wijk aan Zee: Squadron Leader H Young, Flying Officer V MacCausland, and Sergeants R Horsfall, C Roberts, L Nichols, A Yeo and W Ibbotson. Some figures are also in the likenesses of Wing Commander Guy Gibson VC and Barnes Wallis. The installation, a collaboration between *Standing with Giants* artist Dan Barton and military artist Simon Smith, will be in place at the Lincoln site until mid-August. IBCC

Britain's KFOR mission extended to 2026

The British military is to continue its contribution to the NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, Armed Forces minister James Heappey announced while visiting its capital, Pristina. The UK has participated in the KFOR peacekeeping effort in Kosovo since 1999, and in 2008 was the first to recognise the country's independence.

The move coincides with heightened tensions in Kosovo in which 30 NATO peacekeepers, from Hungary and Italy, have been injured. The recent unrest is centred on the election of ethnic Albanian mayors in ethnic Serbian majority areas following a Serb boycott of the vote.

NATO currently deploys 3,800 peacekeepers there, which is to be boosted by a further 700 as well as another battalion placed on a seven-day warning order. The British Army already maintains a battalion-size force ready to deploy to Kosovo at short notice.

Airman silhouettes honour dam raiders



'Little ships' mark coronation

London's St Katherine Docks hosted a charming assembly of brightly decorated and historic watercraft on May 6, marking the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

The regatta, organised by the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships, saw 33 of the famous small boats used to support the 1940 Dunkirk evacuation being sailed up the Thames in the

largest rally of surviving ADLS craft in recent years. At the moment the king was crowned, the boats sounded their horns in a salute and the crews stood to attention on the decks.

The oldest watercraft present was the 1920-built motor yacht *RIIS 1*, which was commandeered as HMS *Manatee* between 1940-1946 and saw extensive service.



RIIS 1, at 103 the oldest craft at the rally SIMON MURDOCH



Some of the 33 boats at the Coronation Day ADLS Regatta SIMON MURDOCH

Gurkha becomes first double amputee to summit Everest

A Gurkha who lost both of his legs in Afghanistan in 2010 has become the first double above-knee amputee to summit Mount Everest, Nepal.

Hari Budha Magar, 43, who lives in Canterbury, Kent, took on the challenge to raise funds for charity and to prove disability is no barrier to aspiration. Reaching the summit of the 8,849m peak on May 18, he said: "This has hit home for me that if we are passionate, disciplined, hard workers and believe in ourselves, then nothing can stop us".

The former Royal Gurkha Rifleman – who has previously climbed Mont Blanc in the Alps and Kilimanjaro in Tanzania – began the Everest undertaking 13 years after stepping on an IED. Hari said that after the incident he felt his life was over. He battled alcoholism

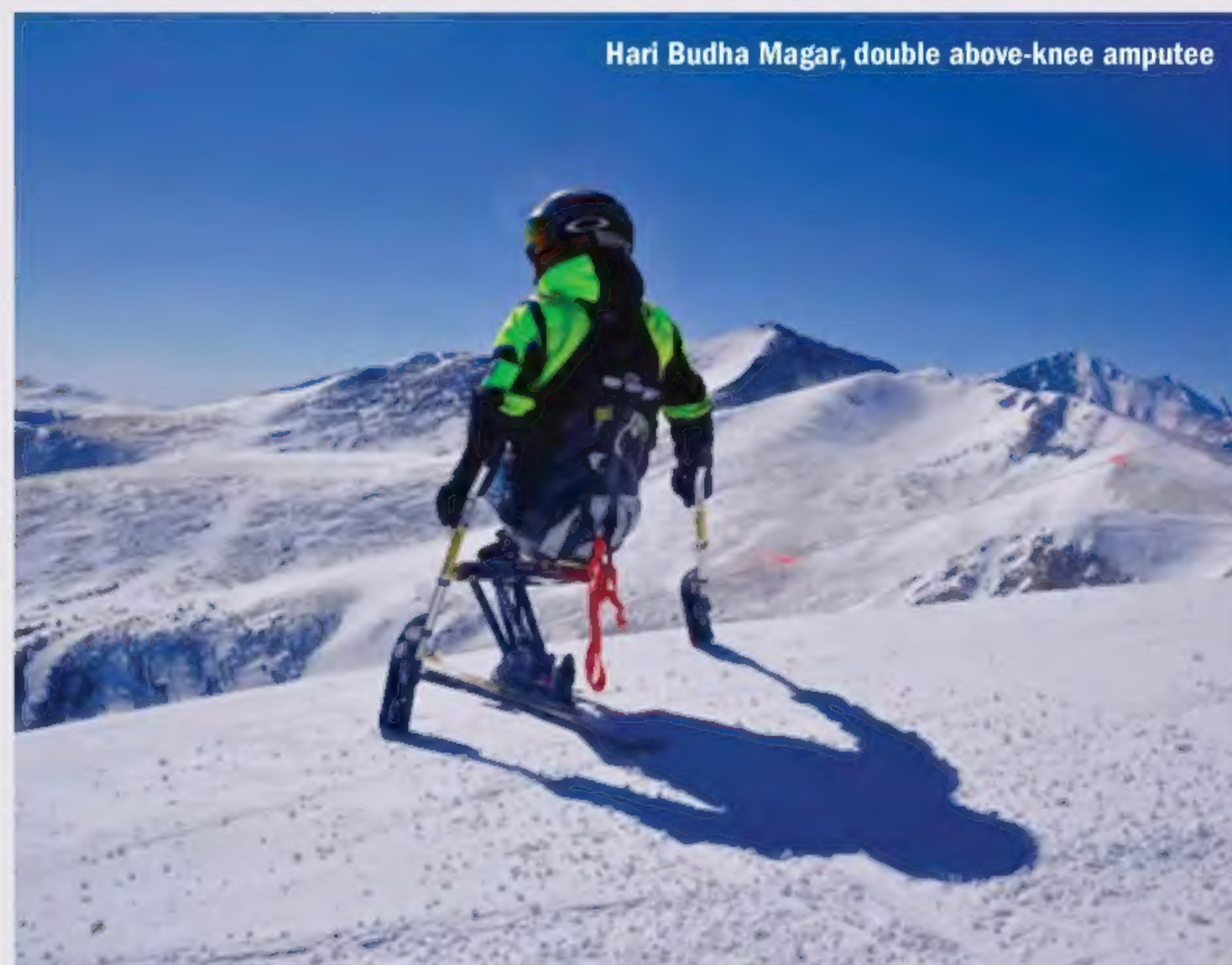
and severe depression, reflecting: "It was a pretty hard time and at one point I was just drinking too much, to just control the pain and emotions – I even tried to kill myself a couple of times."

After acclimatising at base camp below Everest, Hari and his team, including his brother, former SAS troop leader Krish Thapa, began the ascent. "As we were climbing, all of my jackets became completely frozen. Even our warm water within our Thermos flasks froze, so we could not drink", Hari said, also revealing that his oxygen mask froze over. "The climb didn't go entirely to plan because of poor weather. Oxygen supplies ran low and at least half of the team turned back. I wanted to give up at least three separate times. But we pushed hard and five of us made it to the summit of

the peak. We reached the top of the world. If I can climb Mount Everest, then anyone can achieve their dream."

After his descent, Hari was taken to Kathmandu where he was greeted by well-wishers, including the Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal

and the country's President Ram Chandra Poudel. Hari hopes his climb will raise £884,900 for the five charities that helped his recovery: The Gurkha Welfare Trust, the On Course Foundation, Blesma, the Pilgrim Bandits and Team Forces.



Hari Budha Magar, double above-knee amputee

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SAS: Rogue Heroes S2 starts shooting

Filming for the second series of wartime drama *SAS: Rogue Heroes* has begun, the BBC has announced.

Inspired by Ben Macintyre's best-selling book about the origins of the Special Air Service, the first series of the BBC/Kudos Productions show attracted an audience of 9.4 million viewers. The upcoming series picks up the story in the spring of 1943, with Paddy Mayne now at the head of the SAS as the regiment turns its attention to mainland Europe.



However, GHQ has cast doubt over the unit's future and a surprising arrival will make the year a tumultuous time for 'Stirling's Originals'. Original

cast members are set to return, including Jack O'Connell as Mayne, Connor Swindells as David Stirling, Sofia Boutella as Eve Mansour and Dominic

West as Dudley Clarke. New cast members will include Gwilym Lee as Bill Stirling and Con O'Neil as General Bernard Montgomery.

Series creator Steven Knight said: "It's so good to be back in the wild world of the SAS. The second chapter is even more incredible than the first and we hope to do justice to the brave men and women whose story we are telling."

SAS: Rogue Heroes Series Two is scheduled to be released in 2024.

70 year first for RM Commandos

Royal Marine Commandos have deployed to South Korea for the first time since the Korean War. Marines of 'Bravo' Company, 40 Commando, have participated in large-scale exercises alongside the Republic of Korea Marines and the US Marine Corps. The British troops were involved in crisis response, disaster relief and amphibious manoeuvres. Exercise Ssangyong was the largest amphibious exercise held in Korea for five years and took place near Pohang, 160 miles southeast of Seoul. Some 28,000 marines from three nations, 30 warships, 70 aircraft and 50 amphibious assault vehicles were involved. Britain's Commandos operated as part of a surveillance/reconnaissance

team, testing new equipment, aiding operational decision-making and directing strikes.

It is a historic return for the Marines, and marks the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice. During the conflict, 41 (Independent) Commando fought at the Battle of Chosin Reservoir and carried out raids behind North Korean lines. In 1957, the unit received a US Presidential Unit Citation.

Further deployments across the Indo-Pacific are to take place this summer, including in Australia. Major Aran Sandiford RM, who led the 40 Commando element on the deployment, said: "Royal Marines must be ready to deploy, sustain and fight anywhere in the world alongside our allies and partners."

SAS embassy siege hero dies

Special Air Service veteran Mel Parry QGM, thought to be among the last men to have stormed the Iranian embassy at 16 Princes Gate, Westminster, in 1980 has died after "a very long illness", his former 22 SAS colleague Bob Shepherd announced.

Parry served with the world-famous special forces unit for almost three decades and participated in the defining operation on April 30-May 5, 1980, which culminated with 35 members of 22 SAS storming the occupied embassy building and rescuing all but two of the 26 hostages, with five gunmen killed and one SAS trooper wounded. The 17-minute Operation Nimrod, which was broadcast to the world live on the BBC, consolidated the SAS as an elite unit in the eyes of the public.

Paying tribute on his website, Bob Shepherd said that Mel was "one of the finest men to have served

Members of the SAS forcing entry into the embassy on May 5, 1980, ending the six-day siege
PA/TOPFOTO



with the regiment. I write this as he died from a very long illness in Hereford. My heart goes out to Mel's family and close friends."

Fellow SAS veteran and author Chris Ryan also posted a tribute: "You were a gentleman and an incredible soldier. We first met when I joined 'B' Squadron in the early 1980s and you were the guiding light of the counterterrorism world that we recognise today. God speed – and don't spare the high explosive."



Then and now: 40 Commando in Korea today, and its 41 Commando forebears more than 70 years ago IMAGES: ROYAL NAVY/NARA

Crikey!

Work progresses on Whirlwind replica

Alex Bowers meets the creators behind a full-size replica of the twin-engined Westland Whirlwind Mk.I

When Flight Sergeant George Wood watched his Westland Whirlwind fighter disintegrate as he descended on his parachute in September 1943, he spared no thought to the historical significance of the moment. He was more preoccupied with escaping German-occupied Brittany. He couldn't have known that the fighting days of his beloved Whirlwind were drawing to a close – and not just the burning wreckage of the one from which he'd baled out, ironically on his 13th

operation. Nor did he realise the role he would play in the type's demise.

Wood returned to Britain on November 1, 1943, having become the first successful evader of 263 Squadron. By that point, the fate of the Whirlwind had been sealed, considered obsolete by the powers that be, and Wood learned that his unit was to be converting to the Typhoon, an aircraft he considered brutish in comparison. He nevertheless had one more sortie to fly before the conversion: to ferry the last

The heavily armed Whirlwind was an innovative fighter but fell into disuse. The reasons why remain contested today WESTLAND



Whirlwind pilot
Flight Sergeant
George Wood
GEORGE WOOD
ARCHIVE



A life-size jigsaw, the home-built parts used to create the aircraft's nose section and cockpit
WHIRLWIND FIGHTER PROJECT



The quartet of replica Hispano 20mm cannon, the armament that, in 1938, was distinctive to the Whirlwind
WHIRLWIND FIGHTER PROJECT



The replica's cockpit interior
WHIRLWIND FIGHTER PROJECT

Whirlwind to Westlands ready for disposal.

Despite not having sat in a cockpit for more than three months, Wood managed to land in Yeovil with only a few hitches. With its twin Peregrine engines shutting down, all that was left for Wood to do was marvel at the creation and wonder why its story needed to end. After all, this heavy fighter outpaced the Spitfire at low-level, its extreme speed for 1938 leading to the nickname of 'Crikey!' – the word apparently borrowed from adverts for Shell and ostensibly exclaimed by many an observer having looked up to see one of the aircraft flash across the sky.

'When the Whirlwind was transferred into the fighter-bomber role, the Spitfire couldn't keep up'

Almost 80 years after this final flight, the story has begun anew as a volunteer group is poised to unveil a static full-sized replica. Spearheaded by the Whirlwind Fighter Project, the painstaking process of organising and ultimately building the aircraft has so far taken more than ten years and includes a curious connection to *Britain at War's* sister title, *FlyPast* magazine.

"On Key Publishing's *FlyPast* forum somebody said that no one could build a Whirlwind," explained project treasurer Matt Bearman. "It was Mike Eastman of the Aircraft Restoration Group in Yorkshire who responded: 'Well, actually, I probably can.' So, we [Norwegian digital designer Gunnar Olson and the late Stuart Hawkins] called his bluff... It was such a good idea and I was really

enthusiastic about joining in."

More than a decade on, the project has developed a clear physical presence in the shape of an intricately detailed, true-to-spec cockpit. Achieving authenticity, Matt said, was of paramount importance: "We went to Westland itself, which at the time was named AugustaWestland. They produced what was left of the original blueprints. Unfortunately, the rest of the drawings had been destroyed in a flood, but we also had other material to help us move the project forward."

It was more than enough to make a start and the project is now well underway. "The next section is going to be the completion of the fuselage," said team member Chris Hayward. "Followed by the tail section and the future phases as the funding comes in. We will do the best we can to make it authentic within our own capabilities."

Once brought together, it is hoped that the replica will serve as a reminder of the aircraft's underrepresented role in the RAF, as well as dispel common myths surrounding the Whirlwind and its perceived failure. "It's mostly about the engines being unreliable," said Matt. "The Peregrine engine was just an end-of-the-line development of the Rolls-Royce Kestrel, one of the most brilliant, reliable engines ever made."

Chris added: "The pilots loved Whirlwinds because they had two engines and had more of a chance of getting home. They were also faster than the Spitfire – when they were transferred into a fighter-bomber role, the Spitfire couldn't keep up in a dive. But to redesign the Whirlwind to fit the Merlin engine would've necessitated a total rebuild."

The proposed overhaul sounded the death knell for the 114 Whirlwinds built. Used



by 263 and 137 Squadrons and beloved though they might have been, the fact that their engines could lose power, combined with the complexity of installing an improved powerplant, ensured their obsolescence.

According to Chris, the Whirlwind's ground-breaking role in the early stages of the war has been overlooked: "The Whirlwind was the very first of the RAF's cannon-armed fighters. There were four 20mm cannon up the nose, a teardrop canopy and a retracting tail wheel that all made it an incredibly significant aircraft."

Those innovations will be highlighted when completed sections of the replica,

"The Whirlwind was the very first of the RAF's cannon-armed fighters. There were four 20mm cannon up the nose, a teardrop canopy and a retracting tail wheel that all made it an incredibly significant aircraft."

TEAM MEMBER CHRIS HAYWARD

registered as P7056 *Spirit of Yeovil*, are put on display at The Kent Battle of Britain Museum in Hawkinge, a site that has had a close association with the Whirlwind project for several years. As Chris noted: "Because Hawkinge is near Manston – the base for Whirlwinds – and there are accounts of the odd Whirlwind or two flying into Hawkinge, we decided it could be a powerful educational tool." Being exhibited here will provide visitors the chance to follow the progress of the project, while learning about the intricacies of airframe construction, as everything comes together over the subsequent months.

The chairman of both the museum trust and the Whirlwind project, Dave Brocklehurst, confirmed: "It was important for the museum to get involved as 263 Squadron received eight Whirlwinds during the Battle of Britain period, although none fired their guns in anger. With the museum having reopened on April 1 for the 2023 season, the stunning cockpit and nose section of the Whirlwind, carefully recreated by engineer Peter Smith, is being displayed alongside two rare Peregrine engines recovered from a crash site, as well as other memorabilia." **BW**



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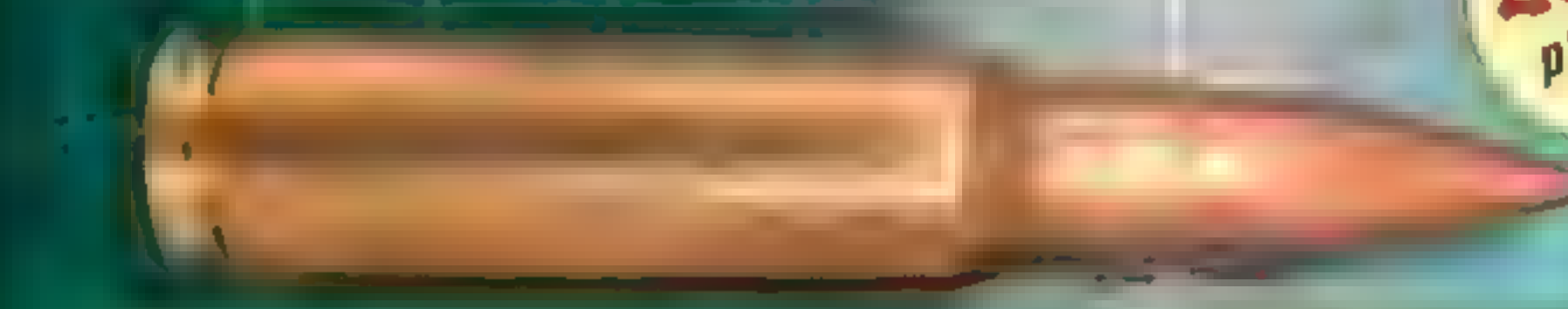
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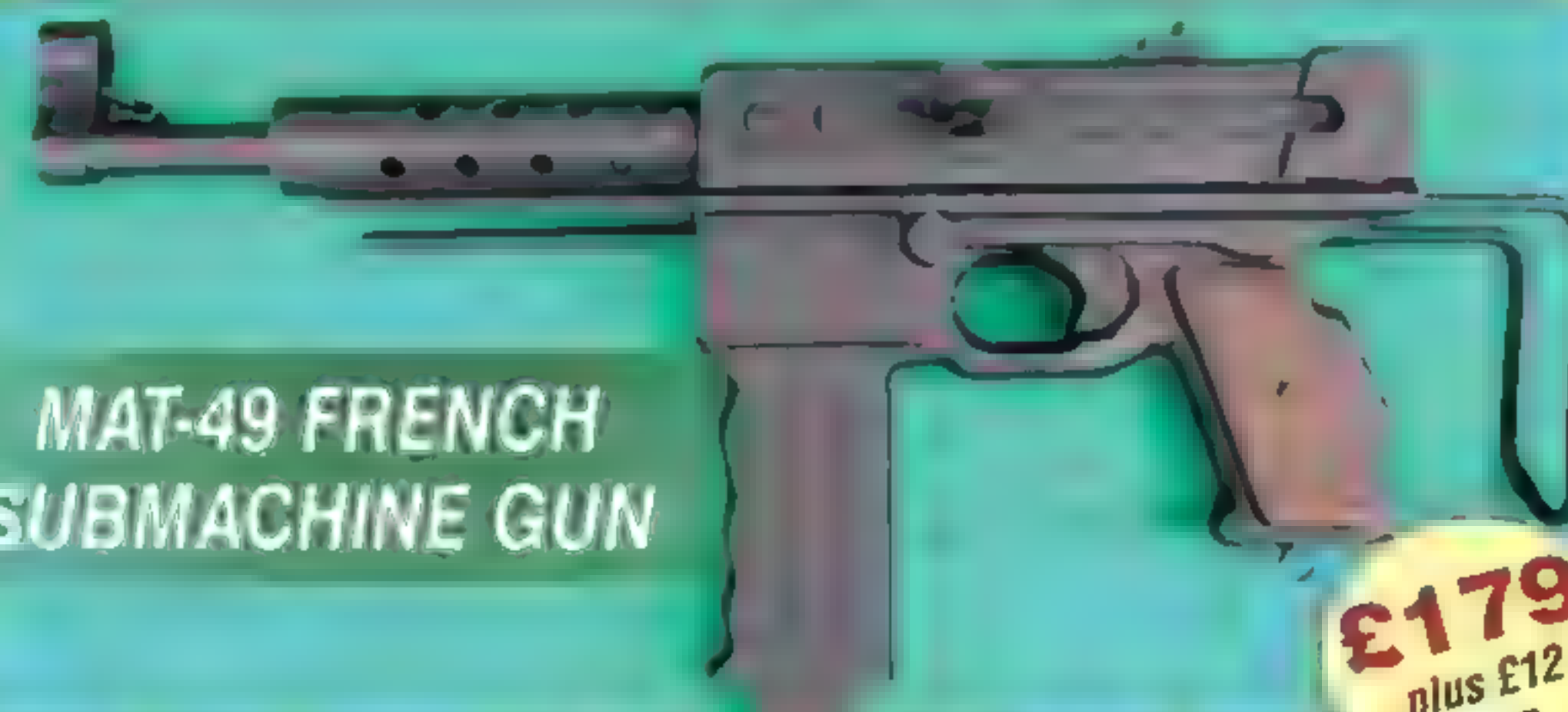
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Despatches

An incredible grouping once belonging to a Belgian and Royal Air Force veteran sells well and an emotive POW chess set proves popular

OUTSTANDING GROUPING COMMANDS ATTENTION

The 20 medals awarded to an airman-turned-intelligence officer proved an auction highlight

Charles Delloye was born in Belgium in July 1894. An early member of the Compagnie des Aviateurs and a World War One veteran, he later joined the RAF and supported British intelligence and evasion efforts.

In 1914, Delloye was one of Antwerp's defenders. Many Belgian troops became prisoners when it fell, but the remnants held at the Yser river in October. Together with Delloye, they received the distinctive Yser medal.

The Compagnie des Aviateurs was renamed Aviation Militaire in March 1915 and Delloye was posted for pilot training in January 1917. He was promoted to corporal that April and posted for service with 2e Escadrille in July, remaining with the squadron for the rest of the war. He flew 102 sorties, primarily for spotting and reconnaissance.

Ending the war as a senior warrant officer. He was one of just four Allied airmen bestowed with the DFM by the British. The citation for this award, run in the *London Gazette* in July 1919, read: "A pilot who has distinguished himself by his skill and his dash, and who was always to be found ready to start on difficult enterprises. During the Flanders offensive of 1918, his work was largely responsible for successful counterbattery work."

Still in Belgium at the start of World War Two, Delloye had served in the country's auxiliary engineers before re-joining the air force, advancing to capitaine aviateur in December 1935. He was captured in 1940, but was released to civilian life. In July 1941, he escaped to join Belgian forces-in-exile in Britain but was interned in Spain until September 1942. After his eventual arrival, he was attached to Sûreté de L'état (Belgian State Security) in London and also enlisted in the RAFVR.

He led the Bureau des Evasions; concerned with



repatriating downed airmen via resistance cells in Belgium. Delloye deployed and retrieved agents, established lines of escape and built cover stories, all while working closely with MI9 – various documents relate to correspondence between him and Airey Neave.

In November 1943, Delloye transferred to HQ L'Aéronautique Militaire, but remained attached to Sûreté de L'état. Appointed capitaine-commandant d'aviation in March 1944, he left the Sûreté de L'état after Belgium's liberation to become an RAF pilot officer. Advanced to flying officer in February 1945 and to acting squadron leader in June, he worked with the Belgium Recruiting Mission until September 1946.

Delloye was discharged from the RAF that October, but remained on active service in Belgium as a major aviateur until January 1947.

For his British-based service, Delloye was appointed an honorary MBE on November 11, 1946. His citation is apparently lost, but would be similar to that of another Sûreté de L'état Belgian who received the same honour: Major

Aviateur Joseph Vuylsteke DFM.

Coincidentally, in 1919, Vuylsteke was one of the other two Belgian pilots recommended for MM (along with Delloye), but whose award was likewise downgraded.

Sold with extensive research, the group comprises 20 medals, including his MBE (military), DFM, Order of Leopold II, Order of Leopold (Military Division), Order of the Crown, Belgian Military Cross, Croix de Guerre (with bronze palm emblem), Yser Medal 1914, Commemorative Medal for the Great War 1914-18, Allied Victory Medal 1914-19, Combat Volunteers Medal 1914-18 and his Frontline Fire Service Cross 1914-18.

The other medals are his Evaders Cross, Volunteer's Medal 1940-45, Armed Resistance Medal 1940-45, Political Prisoner's Cross 1940-45, Prisoner of War Medal 1940-45, Commemorative Medal for the

Second World War 1940-45, Medal for Military Fighters of the Second World War 1940-45 and Volunteer's Medal. Delloye was also entitled other awards absent from this group, such as the British 1939-45 Star, France and Germany Star and Defence Medal.

Estimated at £4,600-£5,500, the Delloye grouping fetched £7,000 at a recent Noonans sale.



POW CHESS SET CARVES WAY TO HIGH PRICE

A unique set of chess pieces, carved by hand by a British POW during World War Two, stirred buyers into making a move

Corporal Andrew Haldane, of the 1st Battalion, London Scottish (Gordon Highlanders), landed at Anzio during Operation Shingle on February 3, 1944. A formidable German counterattack

cut across the 1st Division's salient, isolating the 3rd Infantry Brigade from the front lines, and to enable the brigade to withdraw, the 1st London Scottish were ordered to attack with support from 14 tanks of the 46th Royal Tank Regiment.

Due to adverse weather and a formidable German defence, this move was unsuccessful, the battalion losing 120 men killed, wounded or missing. Listed as missing, Haldane's fate was unknown until April 11, when it was confirmed that he was being held at Stalag VII-A (Moosburg).

To combat boredom, Haldane carved a chess set using a small pen knife and taking sections of

wood from his bedframe. For the black pieces, whose pawns are modelled as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Haldane achieved the colour by scorching them on an open flame. The white pawns are modelled as children taking part in various sports.

With Stalag VII-A liberated by the US 14th Armored Division on April 29, 1945, Haldane was repatriated – bringing the chess set home with him. The unique set, together with paperwork detailing its origins and provenance, fetched a hammer price of £650 at a recent McTear's Auctioneers sale, surpassing its £500 estimate.



IMAGE: MCTEAR'S

ADMIRAL'S 'F*** YOU!' MEDAL SELLS STRONGLY

A rare medal awarded to Admiral of the Red Sir Thomas Pakenham exceeded its estimate at a recent Noonans sale

The Naval Gold Medal was presented to Pakenham following the Glorious First of June, the first and largest naval battle of the War of the First Coalition. Pakenham, then a captain, led the 74-gun *Invincible* during Earl Howe's overwhelming 1794 victory.

That day, 25 Royal Navy ships of the line engaged 26 French ships of the line, Pakenham crippling the 84-gun *Juste* so that Howe could board it. A contemporary – perhaps apocryphal – account notes the manner in which Pakenham engaged his opponent: "F*** you! Have you surrendered?" he asked. Receiving a similarly strong response, he shot back with: "[Then] why the f*** don't you go on firing!"

Seven French ships were sunk or captured, with 7,000 casualties, while the British lost none and suffered 1,200 dead and wounded. The *Invincible* was heavily damaged and Pakenham was named in Howe's despatch as having "particular claim to his notice."

King George III presented gold chains to six of the seven flag officers and to the captain of the fleet, Sir Roger Curtis, but later instituted the Naval Gold Medal to reward courage shown at the battle and in future actions. Two versions were produced, a large 2-inch example for flag officers, commodores and captains of the fleet, and a small 1½-inch version for captains of ships of the line.



The Honourable Thomas Pakenham was born on September 29, 1757, the younger brother of Captain Lord Longford who commanded the *America* at the First Battle of Ushant in July 1778. Pakenham joined the navy in 1771 and, by 1775, was the acting-lieutenant on the *Sphinx*. In 1776, he was promoted lieutenant of the frigate *Greyhound* and, in 1778, joined the *Courageux* and was also present at the First Ushant.

His first command came in 1779, with rapid appointments to successively larger warships. He led the 28-gun *Crescent* at the relief of Gibraltar in April 1781 and was at the Battle of Cape St Mary, when two Dutch frigates engaged two British frigates. There, Pakenham's *Crescent* was overwhelmed, only to be recaptured immediately by the larger *Flora*. He was court martialled but honourably acquitted, the court commending him and noting that he did not strike the flag until, by

demasting and the disabling of his guns, resistance was impossible.

After the Glorious First of June, Pakenham was appointed to lead the ship he had had a hand in capturing.

He sat in the Irish Parliament until its abolition in January 1801 and was promoted to rear-admiral in 1799, vice-admiral in 1804 and admiral in 1810, becoming admiral of the red in 1821 until his death in 1836.

Pakenham's Naval (Small) Gold Medal 1794-1815 is enclosed in a plain gold band and features a gold, three-pronged ribbon buckle.

On the reverse are the engraved words: "THE HON THOMAS PAKENHAM CAPTAIN OF HMS THE INVINCIBLE ON THE 1 OF JUNE MDCCXCIV + THE FRENCH FLEET DEFEATED +"

Estimated at £60,000, the medal, one of just 139 awarded and 25 bestowed on participants of Glorious First of June, fetched £65,000.

IMAGE: NOONANS

FORTHCOMING SALES

- Wallis & Wallis July 18, 2023
- McTear's July 19, 2023
- C&T Auctioneers & Valuers July 19, 2023
- Noonans July 26 & September 13, 2023
- Hartley's Auctioneers & Valuers August 2, 2023
- Special Auction Services August 8-9, 2023
- Wilson55 August 9, 2023
- Warwick & Warwick August 16, 2023
- Adam Partridge Auctioneers & Valuers September 6-7, 2023
- Tennants September 20, 2023

NOTE: Listings include medals, militaria, arms and armour, war art and other historical-themed sales.

Dates and catalogues are subject to change.

Field Post



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Renegades and moles

Readers of my article *The Oberursel 18* (BAW, June 2023) may be interested in another aspect of life at Dulag Luft Oberursel. The POWs in the camp felt uneasy about potential collaborators in their midst, particularly a number of officers who seemed a little too cosy with the Germans.

American-born Major John Dodge DSO, DSC, joined the Royal Naval Division in World War One before transferring to the army. He re-enlisted in 1939 and in 1940 was captured, without shoes, and had to march barefoot in a POW column. Dodge was a relative by marriage of Winston Churchill and had familial connections in diplomatic posts in Berlin, Bern, Geneva and Lisbon. He reckoned he could wangle repatriation, but first had to hoodwink the Germans into believing he had been neutralised, including writing in praise of Hitler in letters home. Meanwhile, his relatives pulled strings in an effort to get him exchanged or invalided.

As the US was neutral at the time, it acted as the protecting power for British POWs and its officials were able to visit camps. Countless relatives and friends of Dodge were

eager to do what they could to facilitate an exchange, visiting Dulag Luft with messages from his wife and his mother. The latter also wrote to Churchill, exaggerating Dodge's injuries and adding that her brother had asked President Roosevelt to have him exchanged for a grandson of the Kaiser interned in Canada. After Johnny's feet had healed, he accepted he had no hope of fleecing a medical board, however, his feigned pro-Nazi attitude had not escaped the notice of fellow POWs.

More alarming was the presence of Pilot Officer Benson Freeman, a pre-war Mosleyite who voiced contempt for Bolshevism and admiration for fascism. Roger Bushell, among others, asked the Senior British Officer Harry Day to order Freeman to keep his views to himself. Day refused, stating that German propagandists would have a field day if they learned British POWs were curtailing freedom of speech. Freeman's political views did not escape German notice and he was invited for discussions. He later joined the German Foreign Office as a scriptwriter for the *Germany Calling* service. He surrendered

in May 1945, having joined the SS. Post-war, after he was imprisoned, he told his lawyer: "This shows just how rotten this democratic country is. The Germans would have had the honesty to shoot me."

On another occasion, Flying Officers Vincent Byrne and Michael Casey and Sergeant Michael Joyce, all Irish, were interviewed by a board that included a supposed Irishman asking questions about the Emerald Isle. It became clear to them that the Germans were attempting to recruit Irish POWs. Casey treated the notion with contempt, but Byrne proposed he go along with it so that he might be landed as a saboteur and betray the operation. MI9 approved of his plan, but the Germans were not fooled. Meanwhile, Joyce was persuaded to spy on his comrades and was sent, in German uniform, to interrogate POWs. In September, he 'escaped' to infiltrate an escape line. He reached Gibraltar and was repatriated, awarded the MM and commissioned. Post-war, his duplicity was revealed and, once he had confessed, he was stripped of his medal.

Charles Rollings

Commando Order culpability

I have enjoyed the first couple of issues of *Britain at War* that I have received as a gift subscription. However, I would like to point out a small error on page 63 of June 2023 issue, within the *Behind the Wire* article.

You include a snippet concerning Hitler's Commando Order, which briefly discusses Operation Bulbasket and the murder of the SAS troops. This states that they were shot by the SS, but this is not the case. The attack on the Vemmeres camp was indeed carried out by units of 17 SS-Panzer Grenadier-Division 'Götz von Berlichingen'. However, the captured SAS men and a USAAF Mustang pilot were murdered by the reconnaissance squadron of the 158. Reserve-Division of the German LXXX Corps, which carried out Hitler's Commando Order.

I appreciate this was only a snippet, so please forgive me if I am being too pedantic.

Chris Pratt

Editor: It is great to hear that you are enjoying the magazine. There are no accusations of nitpicking or pedantry here - if we've made a mistake, however small, then we are happy to correct it. Well spotted!

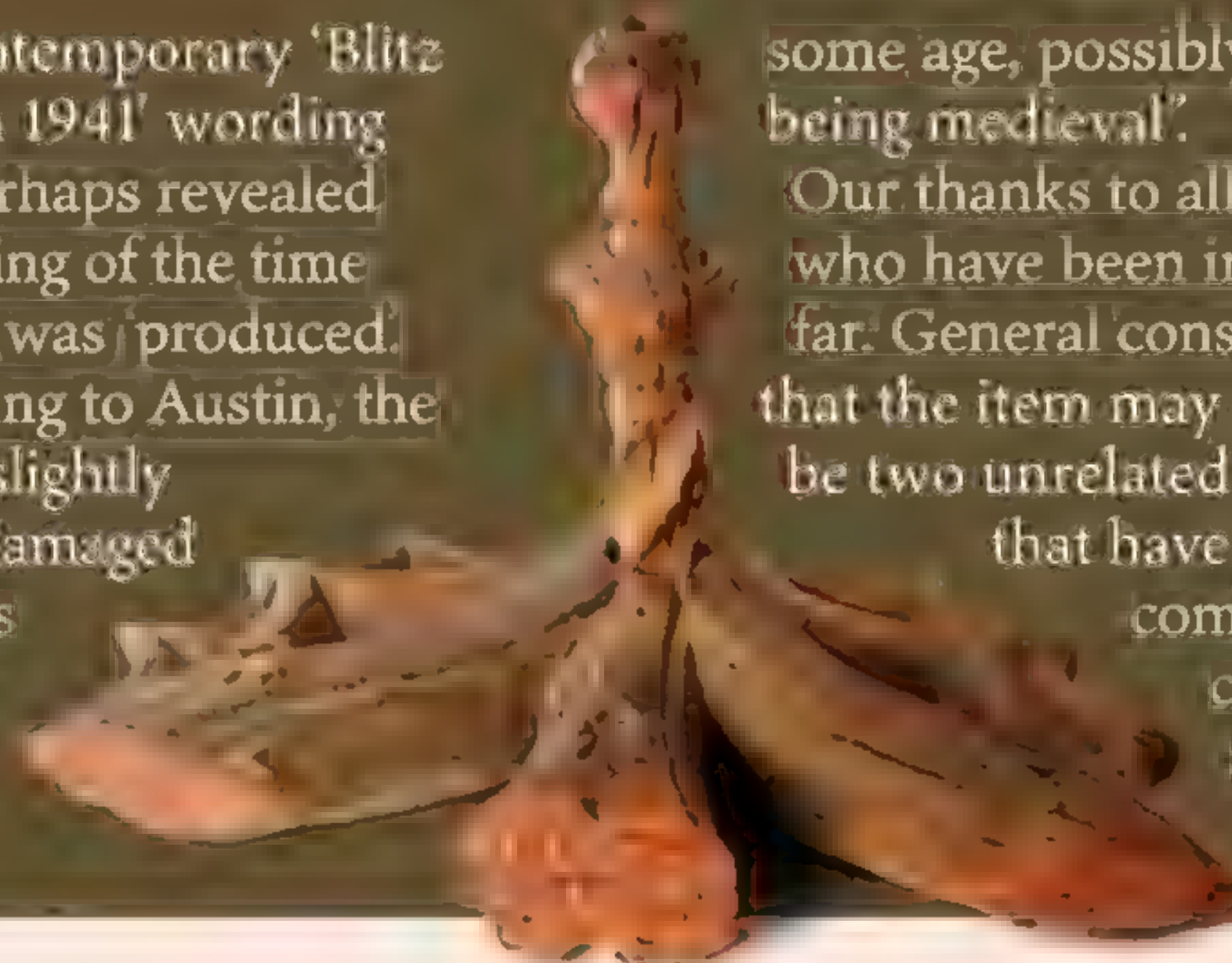
Austin's mystery item: update

We recently appealed in print and on social media for information regarding the purpose or origin of an item of militaria covered in Austin J Ruddy's regular series.

The 9in tall wooden object, which appeared in the June issue and is shown again here, was purchased from London Camden Passage Antiques Arcade in 1991.

The contemporary 'Blitz London 1941' wording on it perhaps revealed something of the time when it was produced. According to Austin, the item is slightly bomb-damaged "and has

IMAGE:
AUSTIN J
RUDDY



some age, possibly even being medieval'.

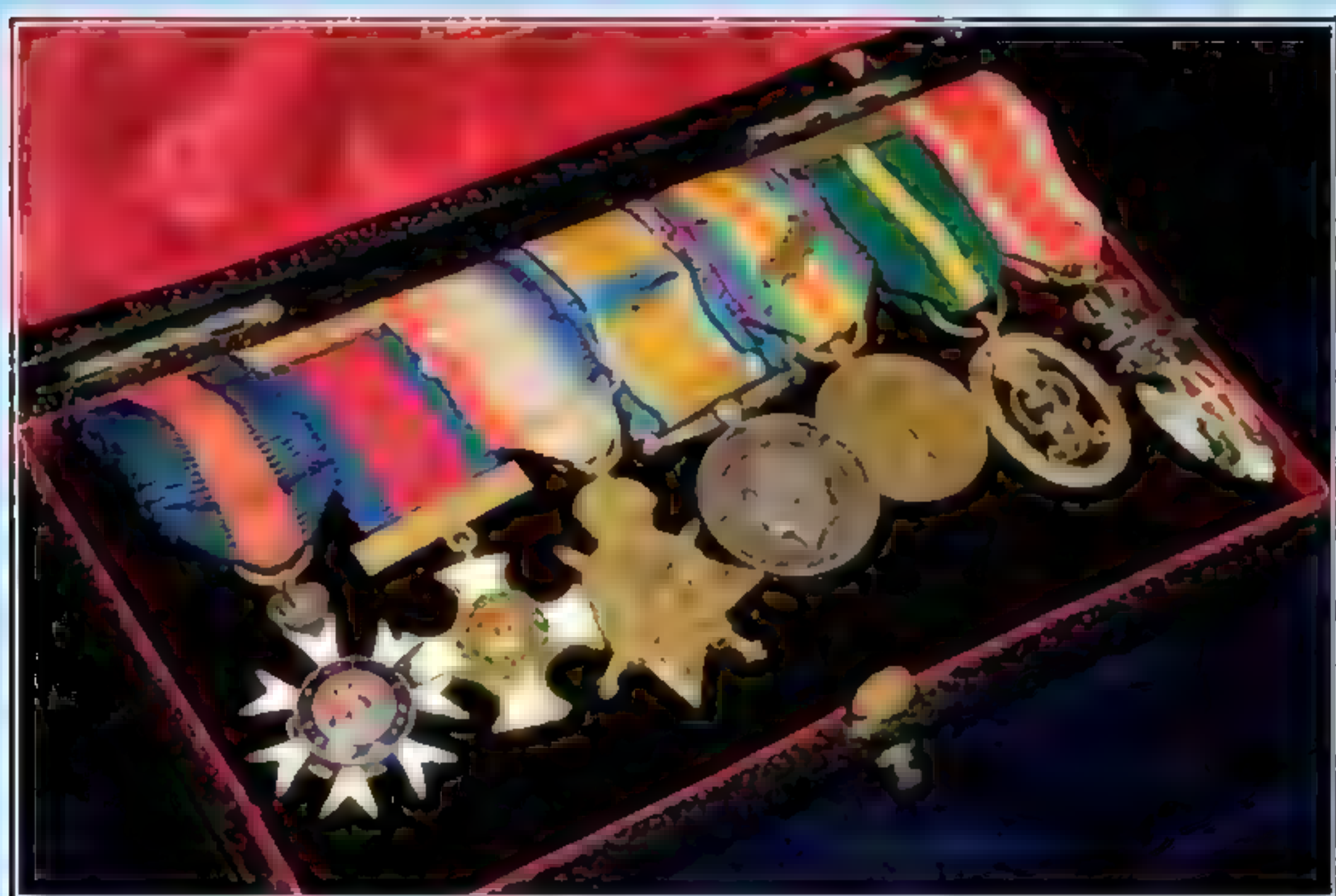
Our thanks to all those who have been in touch so far. General consensus is that the item may actually be two unrelated objects that have been combined to create the artefact, and

Clive Woodley suggested that it could be a support for a table. John Shipman asked whether it was a boss from a vaulted ceiling, and Tim Warrener believes it could be part of the roof from Westminster Abbey or from neighbouring buildings, which were damaged by German bombs on May 10/11, 1941.

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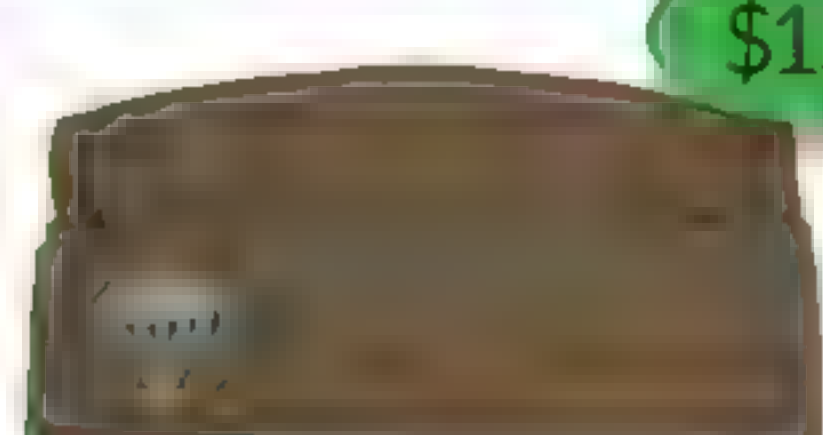
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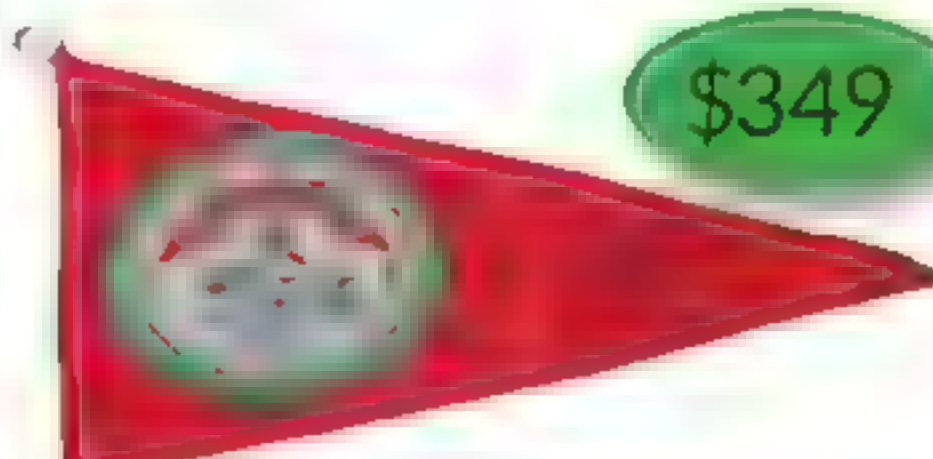
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BATTLE OF THE SAMICHON RIVER

In the final hours of Korean War, the Chinese launched numerous attempts to evict the outnumbered defenders of the 'bloody Hook'

WORDS: MICHAEL KELLY



Hell on *the* **Hook**



Death stalked Samichon Valley. Chinese artillery smashed onto Green Finger Ridge, forcing the four-man Australian outpost to hug the earth in the hope of being spared from the storm of red-hot iron. "I've been hit in the back!" cried Private Leon Dawes after being struck through the body by shrapnel.

The 19-year-old was likely the last Australian combat death of the Korean War.

The war that had been raging for three years was in its final days. Armistice negotiations that started on July 10, 1951, had dragged on for two years before both parties finally agreed to terms on July 19, 1953. The



MAIN IMAGE: A 2/RAR Bren team on the Hook, despite the looming armistice, the Australians were itching to fight. They got their wish PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM

LEFT: Men of Duke of Wellington's Regiment and a South Korean interpreter enjoy a smoke while waiting for dusk and before a patrol ahead of The Hook, June 1953 TOPFOTO

“Rumours of an impending armistice added to the men’s apathy... but, with intel pointing to one last Chinese assault, the Aussies were keen to get to grips with their foe”

May 28, 1953, and Australian troops watched from their positions on Hill 210 as Chinese attacked the Dukes on the Hook
GEORGE LUFF/AWM

This shell-pocked landscape greeted 2/RAR when the battalion arrived on the Hook
PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM

signing was agreed for the morning of July 27, but rather than wind down operations, the Chinese launched a series of attacks, their main target: a series of hills in the Samichon Valley.

From ancient times, this valley had been used as an invasion route. Both North Korean and Chinese troops had traversed it in 1950 to capture, then recapture, Seoul as the war raged up and down the peninsula. Dividing the valley was the Samichon, running north to south before joining the Imjin river. A crescent-shaped series of hills and ridges just west of the Samichon provided an important, if nightmarish, bastion. It provided a 360° view and a dominant vantage from which to observe the Imjin and beyond.

These positions, due to their topography, became known as ‘the Hook’. With Seoul only 25 miles south, its defenders knew how vital it was to hold. Major-General Michael West, GOC 1st Commonwealth Division, believed that if the Chinese were able to capture the Hook, a general withdrawal of 4,400 yards would have been necessary. Such a retreat would cede control of the north bank of the Imjin and have given the Chinese a strong position to launch further offensives.

To the men in the front, the war seemed unending. Rumours of an impending armistice added to their disbelief and apathy. For the Diggers of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (2/RAR), peace

was the last thing on their minds. In early July 1953, they had taken over the Hook, one of the most bitterly contested locations of the war. They spent weeks rebuilding shattered positions and fighting the Chinese off their wire, casualties a near daily occurrence as both sides vied for dominance and incoming artillery and mortar fire was constant.

But, with intel pointing to one last Chinese assault, the Aussies were keen to get to grips with their foe.

Battered Brits

The Hook already had gained a grim reputation, becoming known as ‘the Bloody Hook.’ Between March 1952 and May 1953, the Chinese had tried four times to take it. During the most recent battle, the Chinese launched a major attempt to capture it that fell on the 1st Battalion, The Duke of Wellington’s Regiment. On the evening of May 28, a whirlwind barrage announced the next assault just before 8pm. Using Green Finger Ridge, the Chinese rapidly gained the Dukes’ front line, but despite repeated attacks, the British held on.

Chinese shifted focus to the adjacent 1st The King’s Regiment on Hill 146. Like the Dukes, The Kings held grimly, supported by entire Commonwealth Division’s artillery and Centurions from the 1st Royal Tank Regiment. The Australians on Hill 210, at the other end of the line, had a grandstand view of British endurance as illumination rounds turned night into day.

The Hook was secured at 3.30am on May 29, but its defences ceased to exist. The Dukes suffered 20 men killed, 86 wounded and 20 missing (who had been captured). Exhausted, the Dukes were relieved





by the 1st Royal Fusiliers, which had been seconded from the 28th British Commonwealth Brigade.

The Fusiliers were in turn relieved by the Kingsmen.

With all signs pointing towards another major effort, General West made the decision to conduct a divisional move in place to relieve the battered British 29th Brigade. The Canadian 25th Brigade moved to the right, replacing the 28th Commonwealth Brigade, led by Brigadier John Wilton, which moved to the left. The 29th took the centre.

As 2/RAR and 3/RAR were the strongest battalions in his brigade, Wilton placed them on the Hook and 2/RAR arrived on the night of July 9/10, 3/RAR the following night. Lieutenant-Colonel George

Larkin, 2/RAR's CO, placed 'A' Company on the right, 'B' Company, with the Anti-Tank Platoon (acting as infantry) on the Hook and 'C' Company on the left. 'D' Company was in reserve but took over from 'B' on July 23/24. 'C', which occupied Hill 121, overlooked Hill 111 and the re-entrant that led up to Hill 121. This was covered by a position known as the Contact Bunker, and a six-man section led by Lance Corporal Ken Crockford occupied it.

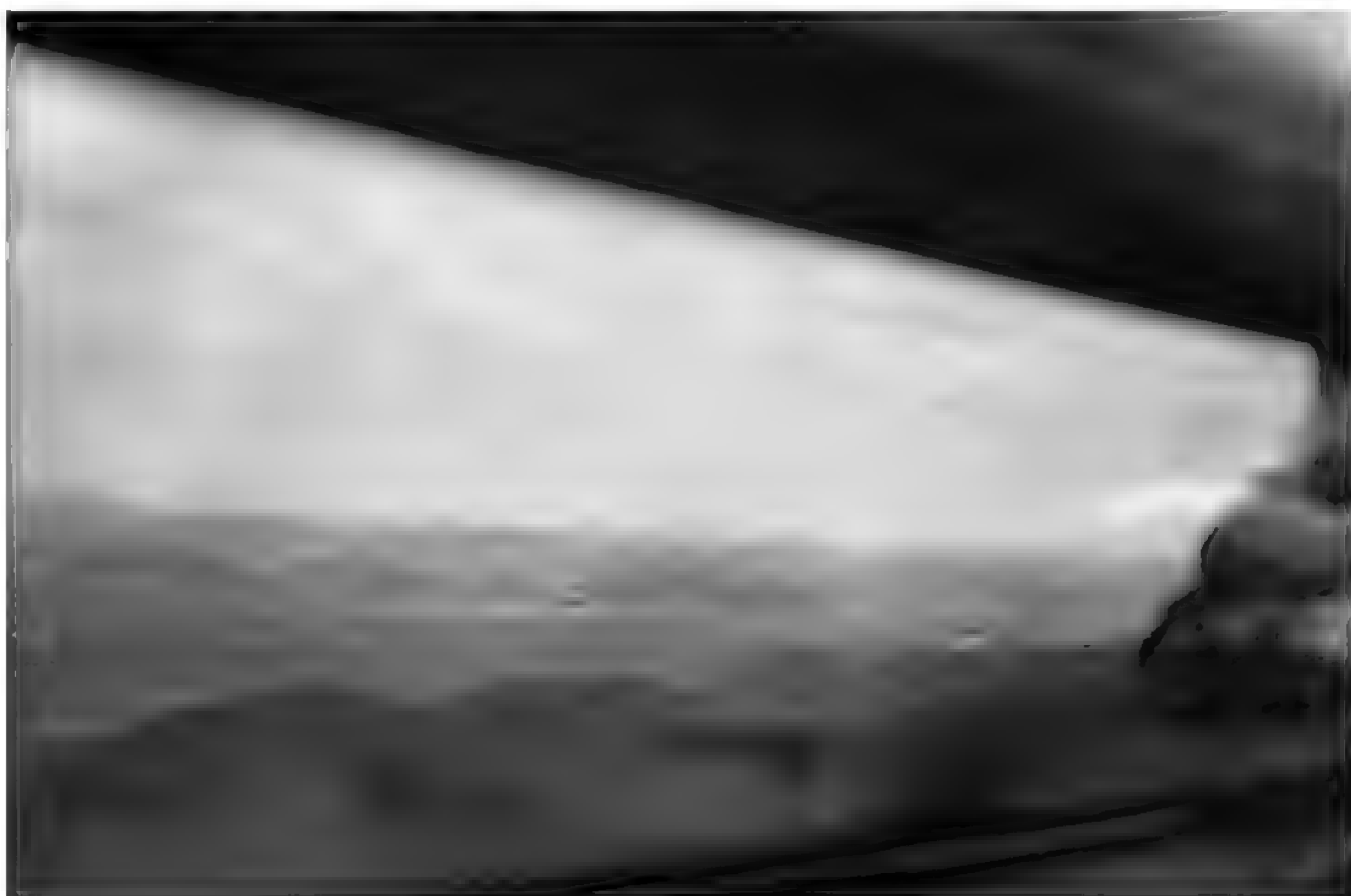
Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur MacDonald, 3/RAR's CO, placed his 'A' Company adjacent to 2/RAR's 'A' Company and put 'B' Company to its right, overlooking the Samichon. His 'C' and 'D' Companies were in reserve. Completing the setup, Wilton placed the Durhams across



ABOVE: Private Doug Cruden (left) was killed by a Chinese shell after being spotted above the sky line PHILLIP HOBSON/

ABOVE LEFT: Men of 'B' Company, 2/RAR, shovel dirt out of the new Company HQ PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM

A view towards the Samichon from the 2/RAR's forward observation post on the Hook GEORGE LUFF/AWM



the river and the Fusiliers in reserve.

Meanwhile, Sergeant Brian Cooper, a 19-year-old from Western Australia, and nine men from 2/RAR's Medium Machine Gun Platoon, had arrived on Hill 111 the previous day and took over from the King's machine gunners. Cooper and his men were embedded with US Marines of How Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, which only completed their own return to the front line that afternoon.

Like the Western Front

The Chinese wasted no time in attacking two outposts, Berlin and East Berlin, forward of their positions between Boulder City and Hill 111. The latter was overrun, but a counterattack by the Marines wrested the outpost back. It was a hot welcome for the Australians on Hill 111, who came under artillery and mortar fire.

After arriving on the Hook, the Australians were met by utter devastation. In places the trenches were no deeper than crawl spaces, and many bunkers and positions needed significant repairs. They got to work under the gaze of Lieutenant Patrick Forbes and his Assault Pioneer Platoon, which repaired the wire emplacements forward of the Hook. Two weeks later, in spite of constant Chinese artillery fire, the defences had been made more formidable than ever before. Forbes was later awarded the MC for his

BATTLE OF THE SAMICHON RIVER

efforts on the Hook and in 2/RAR's previous positions.

All work was done at night as any movement during the day invited unwanted attention. With large stockpiles of ammunition, the Chinese were not adverse to using artillery for 'sniping'. The Australians received a grim reminder on the morning of July 11 when Private Doug Cruden of 'A' Company, 3/RAR, was killed by a 76mm shell after being spotted.

The Australians not only had to contend with steel raining upon them, but also Mother Nature delivering storms of her own as the wet season hit. On the night of July 14/15, the heavens opened and the Imjin rose 65ft, inundating Spoonbill Bridge and causing Teal and Harlequin Bridges and the Widgeon Ferry to close for three days. The only way supplies could be brought forward was by amphibious DUKWs, with casualties evacuated on return journeys.

The ferocity of the rain caused bunkers to collapse and the occupants of at least one had to be rescued as a result. Trenches, already churned by Chinese shelling, began to resemble those on the Western Front 40 years before.

On the night of July 19, hours after the armistice had been agreed, the Chinese attacked and overwhelmed the Berlin outposts once more. The men on Hill 111 came under artillery fire, followed by a probing attack that



“The Australians not only had to contend with steel raining upon them, but also Mother Nature delivering storms of her own”

ABOVE: Sergeant Brian Cooper, 19, from Perth, received the MM for his conduct on the night of July 24, 1953. He is shown with a captured PPSH-41 (or the Type 50, a Chinese copy) and magazine pouch
ALAMY

BELOW: Looking up Green Finger Ridge toward the Australian front. This area was one of the bloodiest of the war, with patrols ambushed almost daily
GEORGE LUFF/AWM

Cooper and his men forced back. The Chinese paid dearly for their gains, losing at least one battalion to small arms fire and Marine/Commonwealth artillery. The loss of the Berlins brought the Chinese right onto the main line of resistance and made the Hook a salient that jutted deep into Chinese territory.

Line of fire

Both Australian battalions maintained nightly standing and fighting patrols, and there was frequent contact. These patrols and the determination to dominate no man's land by 2/RAR and 3/RAR drove the Chinese off the Australian wire, providing breathing space.

However, the Chinese had dug in on the reverse slope of Green Finger and had a cave dug from which they sent ambush patrols. Green Finger was scene to many bitter patrol actions, and on the same night the Berlins fell, a 2/RAR patrol on Green Finger was ambushed, killing one 2/RAR man and wounded three. A further patrol was ambushed three days later and another 2/RAR rifleman was killed. The Chinese cave remained unknown to the Australians, who had little idea that ambushers sortied from it to race them to their observation point.

At around 6.15pm on July 23, Wilton called his battalion commanders to a conference and informed them the signing of the armistice was close and that only





essential patrols be sent out. He ordered the news withheld from the men, but rumours gained momentum when several patrols were cancelled. That same night, the Green Finger patrol was ambushed again; all four members were wounded but were able to extract under fire.

Through July 24, the Chinese kept up a desultory fire on the Australian and Marine positions. At 8pm, with heavy rain falling, the Chinese

shelling increased, focusing on the Australian positions on Hill 121 and the Marines over at Boulder City and Hill 111.

Soon after, a 2/RAR patrol on Green Finger called artillery in against Chinese infantry seen moving towards the Hook. The New Zealand gunners responded quickly, their variable time fuses creating airbursts that dispersed the attackers with heavy casualties. The Chinese made several attempts to gain the

Hook during the night, but the Kiwi artillery was so effective that they did not get close to the Australian wire.

Private Colin Beahan, a signaller in 2/RAR's mortar platoon, was working in the platoon signals bunker in 'D' Company's sector when the attack began. A young officer, probably Lieutenant Keith Kirkland, second in command of the mortar platoon, asked Beahan, a qualified linesman, to lay a new line directly to Battalion HQ.

Beahan braved the maelstrom on several occasions to repair broken lines. "You always had one ear cocked for a shell coming in!", he recalled, before running into heavy fire to lay the new line, and then

The iconic Ivor Hele painting 'Green Finger Patrol', shows 2/RAR riflemen fending off a Chinese attack on the ridge COURTESY THE 2/RAR HISTORICAL COLLECTION

D Company's positions on the Hook overlooked Ronson Ridge (foreground), the site of numerous contacts GEORGE LUFF/AWM



SAMICHON'S FILM STAR FUSILIER

One British participant at the Hook and Samichon was Maurice Micklewhite. Called up in April 1952 for National Service, he served in 'C' Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers, in Pusan and Samichon.

Micklewhite, better known today as Sir Michael Caine, wrote of his experiences in his 2018 autobiography *Blowing the Bloody Doors Off*: "I sat in my First World War-style trench in Korea, accompanied by several hundred of the world's most confident and ingenious rats, facing off over the 38th Parallel around two million very p***ed-off Chinese."

"My fear, was that I might be a coward. I might run away. I did believe several times that I might be about to die: on guard duty on my first night on the front line; under sniper fire; on encountering a six-foot snake. In those situations I found

I was not a coward. I was scared witless, but I was not a coward.

"One black, humid, mosquito-infested night, it was my turn to go out on patrol in no man's land, with two mates and an officer. Halfway across unoccupied territory, we smelt garlic, which struck terror into our hearts. The Chinese soldiers chewed garlic like the Americans chewed gum, and the smell was always the first sign you were in trouble.

"When my four-man patrol was ambushed that night, I experienced not fear, but anger, white-hot anger, at the thought I was going to be killed in this terrible stinking place for no good reason... I decided that if I was going to die, I was going to take as many people as possible with me. I was going to fight

my way out. The others agreed. We charged towards the enemy. The enemy, it turned out, wasn't there. We and they charged around each other all night, and eventually the four of us found a safe route back to our line."

It wasn't his only brush with the enemy, sources claiming Sir Michael was ambushed on another patrol and manned a machine gun at the centre of a human wave attack.

Sir Michael Caine (standing, second left) with Royal Fusilier comrades FUSILIER MUSEUM LONDON

"I sat in my trench in Korea, accompanied by several hundred of the world's most confident and ingenious rats, facing off over the 38th Parallel around two million very ped-off Chinese"***

SIR MICHAEL CAINE, 'C' COY, 1ST ROYAL FUSILIERS



BATTLE OF THE SAMICHON RIVER

going back to work, taking requests for mortar fire. It was just as well he did. The Chinese severed every line except Beahan's, which kept the battalion in communication with all of its positions. Kirkland later found and thanked Beahan.

"Get out you bastards!"

Unbeknown to the Diggers, the Chinese had infiltrated a fire control team between Hills 111 and 121, which called artillery down into 2/RAR's rear area, targeting the mortar positions. One was hit and a South Korean soldier was wounded.

On Hill 111, Chinese infantry attacked through their own barrage, attempting to overrun the Australians and Marines. They used satchel charges against Marine bunkers and with sheer weight of numbers, forced them to withdraw to the reverse slope. Chinese porters also brought ammunition, grenades and stores forward. Their intent to stay was clear. Sergeant Cooper's section organised into all-round defence and were joined by 11 Marines who escaped the onslaught. Several tried to take cover in one of the gun bunkers, but Corporal Ron Walker yelled "get out you bastards!", and the Americans returned to the fight.

Needing greater firepower, Walker ran back to a Marine M46 Patton tank behind the Australian positions and borrowed a Browning .30-calibre machine gun, which he added to the section's forward defences. About this time, a Chinese shell hit the ammunition bunker roof, blowing dirt, rocks and shrapnel into the Australian position. Walker recalled being "blown axle over apex" and winded. He also noted that "Dan Mudford was... bleeding from the ears and his face was sand blasted". Walker took Mudford to the Marine Command Post behind Hill 111 then returned to the fray.

Corporal Doug 'Kipper' Franklin, who was on Hill 111 in preparation for his section's transition into the position the following day, found himself in the thick of it. He was stunned by the blast that wounded Mudford but fought on, knowing how desperate the situation was. He tried to use a Marine's M1 Garand rifle, but it jammed: "[Then] I took up my Owen gun, and, to get a better shot, lay on top of the trench. Firing at the nearest enemy, I was in turn shot at and hit in the upper arm. I slid back into the gun pit, spurting blood from an artery and was promptly sent to the command post

Private Jimmy Petrie comforted Private Leon Dawes in the last moments of his life
PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM



"I took up my Owen gun, and, to get a better shot, lay on top of the trench. Firing at the nearest enemy, I was in turn shot in the upper arm. I slid back into the pit, spurting blood"

Lance Corporal Ken Crockford and his section kept the Chinese from overrunning their position during the night of July 25/26
PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM



where a Marine corpsman [medic] gave me first aid."

Franklin saw Mudford at the post, along with several wounded Marines – all of whom needed to be evacuated. But with the roads behind the lines under fire, getting an ambulance through was impossible.

However, the saviour of the wounded was not far off.

Centurion clinician

Corporal Les Pye, a New Zealander attached to the 1st Royal Tank Regiment, was at 'A' Echelon with his vehicle and crew when the battle began. "I was ordered forward at around 9.30pm on July 24", he recalled. Pye was commander of 'the Tug', an older Centurion kept in service as a stores transport. The tank's turret had been removed and two metal doors welded in place.

Its envisaged role was to support (and if needed, recover) Centurion Mk.IIIs, and the commander's position, adjacent to the driver's, had a .30-calibre machine gun jury-rigged as a defensive weapon. As Tug began its descent to the valley, Pye decided test his gun, but "forgot to warn 'Pud' Rowlings, the driver, who had a few choice words for me. But I reminded him that you don't



Brigadier Douglas Kendrew (29th Brigade), Major-General Michael West (1st Commonwealth Division), Lieutenant-Colonel George Larkin (2/RAR), and Brigadier John Wilton (28th Brigade) visited the front on the morning of the armistice PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM

BOTTOM: Chinese soldiers remove the bodies of their comrades from the forward slope of Hill 111 RALPH WARHURST/AWM

BELOW: Colourful flags festoon the Chinese line on the morning of July 28 DOUGLAS BUSHBY/AWM

go into battle without test firing your weapons first!"

Pye did not relate his driver's response. It was likely terse, perhaps starting with an 'f' and ending with two others.

When Tug arrived at the command post, Pye and his radio operator, Barry Morris, helped load the wounded – including Mudford, Franklin and six Marines. The walking wounded were placed inside and after the doors were closed, two stretcher cases were placed on top. "We survived one barrage during the loading and bugged out pronto back to the 2/RAR Aid Post," Pye recalled. He and his crew were kept on hand but were not needed again.

Up on Hill 111 Sergeant Cooper realised that "we were losing the situation, and completely overrun. Enemy infantry was attacking us on all sides. The only course of action I could see, given that we had some cover and the enemy none, was to call friendly artillery fire down upon our own position."

He yelled to his men to take what cover they could. The Kiwi gunnery was exceptional and once again their variable timing bursts took a heavy toll. Cooper and his men continued to fight off repeated attacks until just before sunrise.

After dawn, Walker took Private Ken Cranston on a recce of the Marines' communication trench. As they approached one bunker, the two Diggers were greeted by a Chinese grenade, wounding Cranston in the buttocks. The wounds were

superficial, and he remained on duty. The Australians tried to coax the Chinese soldier to surrender, but he refused. Sergeant Cooper made a tough choice, ordering grenades thrown into the bunker.



Darkest before the dawn

The Marines spent much of the day clearing their front line and bunkers. Corporal Walker recalled "sitting in the doorway of the command post feeling very numb, bloody and tired" as he watched Marines carry the bodies of their comrades to the rear. The Australian machine gunners were relieved by others from 2/RAR's MMG Platoon. For his efforts and those of his section, Sergeant Brian Cooper received the MM.

On the forward slopes of the Marine positions, Chinese stretcher parties worked unhindered to collect their casualties – however, any enemy with a weapon was immediately engaged. Throughout July 25 the Chinese kept up a harassing fire on the Hook and the Marines' positions, and as evening fell, their fire increased and the infantry came on again.

The combined might of the Marine and Commonwealth Divisions opened up on Chinese rally points and the attacking waves. The casualties were devastating, but the Chinese still managed to break into the Marines' line and bypass Hill 111. Four members of 2/RAR's replacement gun section on 111 were wounded, but the position held.

In the Contact Bunker, Corporal Crockford and his men were attacked by a large enemy force. One member of the section fired his Bren continuously, pausing only to change barrels. But, such were the enemy's numbers, the Diggers had to urinate on the hot barrels to cool them down more quickly. The Chinese reached



The relief on the faces of these 2/RAR riflemen is clear as they posed for a photograph on the morning after the armistice DOUGLAS BUSHBY/AWM

the bunker and engaged in hand-to-hand fighting. After an hour, they withdrew, leaving the Australians exhausted, but triumphant.

With the Chinese still between Hills 121 and 111, Crockford made his way past the enemy, under artillery fire, to the Marine command post behind to call artillery down on his position. He made this trip several times, but his actions and those of his men saved their positions from being overrun. Crockford was awarded the MM for his courage and leadership during the night. Circling back to Green Finger, that night's patrol hung on grimly, engaging a large party of Chinese in a fierce contact before the latter were forced to withdraw. Chinese artillery was called to blast the Australians off the ridge.

The Diggers held on determinedly, but in the early hours of July 26, Private Leon Dawes, from Thevenard, South Australia, succumbed to his wounds. His mate, Private Jimmy Petrie, comforted him for his last few minutes. The patrol, carrying their comrade, then withdrew to the Australian front line.

To the bitter end

By dawn, the Chinese had once again withdrawn and the Marines spent much of the day clearing their lines of the dead. That night the Chinese attacked again, but were easily repulsed.

The war was grinding to its bitter end, and 10am on July 27, the armistice was signed at Panmunjom by Lieutenant General William Harrison, representing the UN,

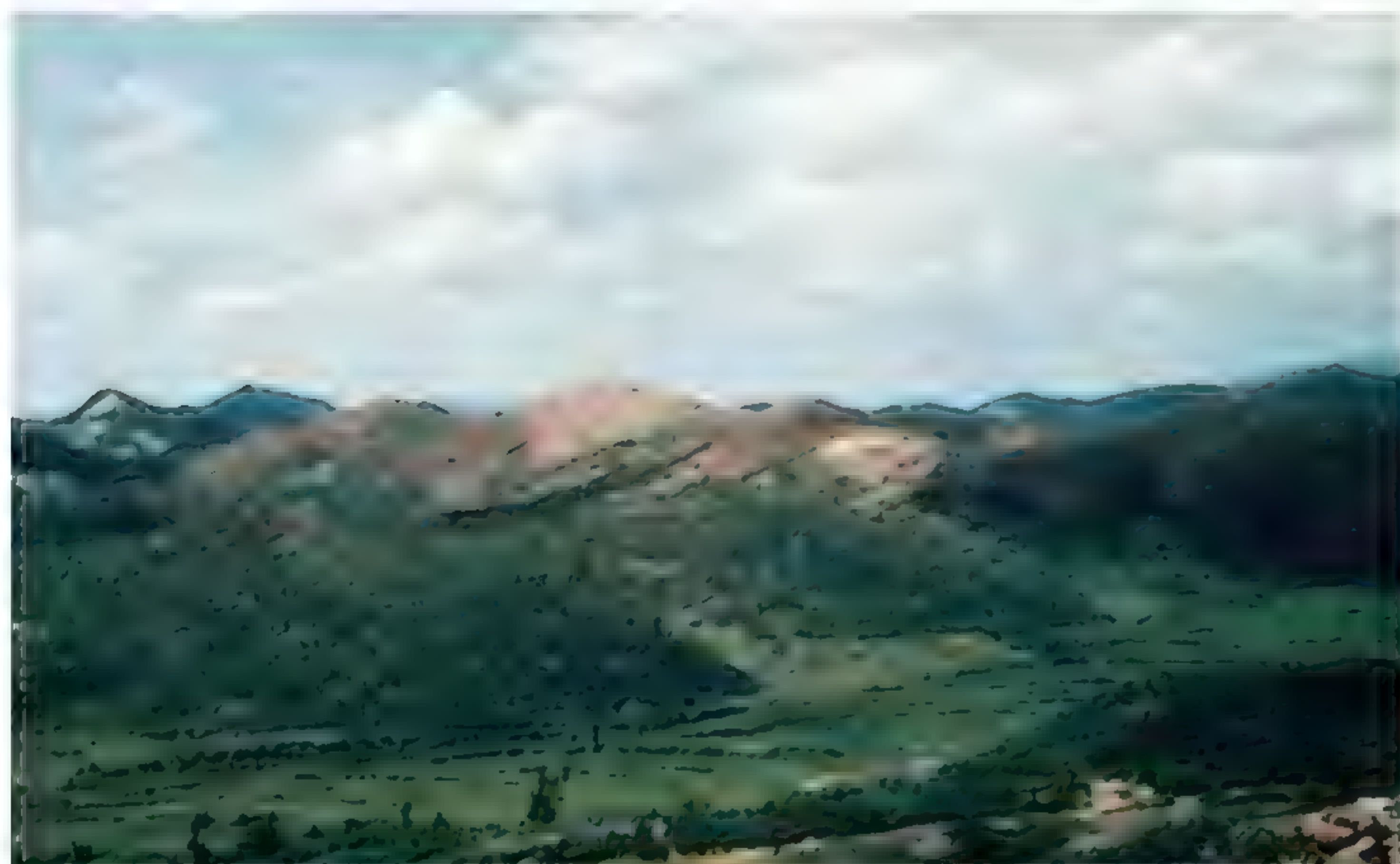
and North Korean General Nam Il, representing the North Koreans and Chinese. With each man ignoring the other, they signed the instrument that was supposed to "ensure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved."

The signatures completed, the armistice took effect at 10pm. While some Chinese shells had landed in the Australian and Marine positions during the day, no further attacks materialised. As the armistice approached, both sides settled into uneasy silence. The war that had started with a bang on June 25, 1950, finished with a whimper three years, one month and two days later.

On July 28, the men of 2/RAR were greeted by the sight of brightly coloured flags above Chinese

BELOW LEFT: The Chinese positions, the shell-pocked hills show the ferocity of fire brought down by the Commonwealth Division's artillery DOUGLAS BUSHBY/AWM

BELOW: A 2/RAR rifleman meets with Chinese soldiers in no-man's land the morning after the armistice PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM





Corporal Ron Walker (l) and Sergeant Brian Cooper enjoy a well-earned drink after the armistice PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM

positions on nearby Seattle and Betty Grable. Some curious Diggers went to meet their former enemy, swapping souvenirs.

Brigadier John Wilton, who witnessed the signing at Panmunjom, visited the front with Major-General

West, Brigadier 'Joe' Kendrew, and 2/RAR's CO, Lieutenant-Colonel George Larkin that morning. Wilton estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Chinese dead still lay in front of the Australian positions. Writing home in a letter to his wife, he recalled that

2/RAR riflemen stand above their trenches on the morning after the armistice. The damage caused by Chinese artillery and mortar fire is clear DOUGLAS BUSHBY/AWM

"the floor of the valley between the Hook and the Chinese positions was almost covered with dead... on the immediate approaches to 2/RAR the bodies literally carpeted the ground, sometimes two deep... it was a terrible sight."

Since arriving on the Hook, 2/RAR suffered nine killed or died of wounds and 31 wounded. In the same time period, the US Marines suffered 181 killed and 1,430 wounded. As part of the armistice terms, each side had 72 hours to withdraw 1¼ miles to create a 2½ mile demarcation line, which today, 70 years on, still exists as the Demilitarized Zone. As the Australians packed up, many wondered what the Chinese hoped to achieve with their last efforts. So many men had died for no gain. Or so it seemed at the time.

In the ensuing years the Republic of Korea has gone from a shattered country with almost no infrastructure to a global powerhouse. Though many paid for its freedom in blood, Australian veterans look on with pride at the country they helped save. On July 27, the 70th Anniversary of the Korean Armistice, we pause to remember and reflect on the service of the 21 UN nations that committed their people to freedom's cause. **BW**



THE **LOST** DIVISION

The Anglo-Commonwealth deployment to Korea was substantial, but veterans and fallen alike have become the forgotten men of a forgotten war.

John Ash examines the key numerics that unlock their campaign

132,000 brothers in arms

British troops first landed in Korea at Pusan in August 1950, and by October 19 had entered Pyongyang. So began three years of success, reversal and stalemate.

Operated under British Commonwealth Forces Korea (BCFK), three brigades formed the 1st Commonwealth Division in July 1951. The division usually comprised a signals troop, artillery regiments/batteries, a British armoured

regiment, a Canadian armoured squadron, engineer and logistical support, medical formations (including the 60th (Para) Indian Field Ambulance) and infantry battalions rotating in and out of three British Commonwealth and one Canadian brigades.

About 60% of strength – 81,000 men – were British, many of them

National Servicemen, peaking at 15,000. There were 25,000 Canadians, 18,000 Australians and 4,700 New Zealanders, while the Indian medical detachment had the unique accolade of maintaining the longest single deployment by any unit under the UN flag.

British, Australian, Indian and New Zealand troops brew up in Korea, March 1951 PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM



6 carriers on station

A strong BCFK naval presence led by Jutland veteran Rear-Admiral William Andrewes persisted throughout the war. One aircraft carrier was on station at all times, with five British carriers, *Glory*, *Ocean*, *Theseus*, *Triumph* and *Unicorn*, and Australia's *Sydney* deployed. These carried RN and RAN Fleet Air Arm machines, including the only British fighter/attack aircraft in theatre. In August 1952, Sea Fury pilot Lieutenant Peter Carmichael shot down a MiG-15, becoming one of only a few to down a post-war jet in a prop-driven aircraft.

Other ships sent included the cruiser *Belfast*, which spent 400 days on patrol,

Sea Fury and Firefly aircraft pass HMAS Sydney. Naval aircraft formed the lion's share of BCFK air power
USN MUSEUM OF NAVAL AVIATION



but *Vanguard*, Britain's last battleship, was not. Her presence was required to check communist ambitions in European waters and, due to her dual role as the royal yacht, she was not fully operational.

The RAF contribution was limited to

Auster army co-operation aircraft and Sunderland flying boats, and as the only front-line Commonwealth air force units deployed were 77 Squadron RAAF and 2 Squadron SAAF, many British pilots flew in USAF squadrons instead.

23,000 rounds in three nights

Korea further highlighted the power of rapid-firing, quick-reacting artillery and the wastefulness of massed infantry attacks.

The communists relied heavily on artillery, saturating UN positions, yet it was UN gunners that reigned supreme. From 1951, when the lines solidified, UN artillery deployed in mutually supporting positions, using high-angle fire and relying on excellent fire

direction, pre-registration and an understanding of neighbouring battery locations and fields of fire, to concentrate bombardments with unprecedented speed..

At Samichon, BCFK guns turned the tide, particularly the 16th Field Regiment, RNZA. The gunners fired 23,000 shells, fuzed to detonate just above ground level, over three nights, wounding 10,000 Chinese, with 2,000-3,000 killed.

A New Zealand 25-pounder battery supports 3/RAR in the Imjin area
PHILLIP HOBSON/AWM



British Cromwell and Churchill tanks were among the vehicles of the last war to clash in Korea, but the new Centurion Mk.III arrived with the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars in November 1950. They were sent by train to Pyongyang, but a reversal in UN fortunes saw them briefly withdrawn to prevent capture – although one was abandoned, Hansard confirms. Communist armour was scarce, so tanks were used as mobile bunkers and

to support infantry. However, a rare tank-on-tank action yielded all sorts of accolades.

On February 11, 1951, two 'C' Squadron, 8th Hussar, Centurions scored the first tank kill of any British unit post-war, opening fire at 3,000 yards – for a while, the record – on a captured Cromwell. It was the only Centurion tank kill of the war, scored against the tank it was designed to replace and which, weeks earlier, had been operated by the 8th Hussars.

Centurion crews fought with distinction. At 'The Hook' in May 1953, 'C' Squadron, 1 RTR, expended 504 20-pounder shells and 26,500 machine gun rounds in a single action.

3,000-yard knock-out

A Centurion fords a frozen river in January 1951. The tank was arguably the most powerful armoured vehicle to fight during the conflict
TOPFOTO



3 long days

A fabled BCFK moment is the Battle of Imjin, the bloodiest engagement for British troops post-war. It is high on rankings of Britain's most important battles, not just because of the sheer gallantry displayed but also for its lasting strategic ramifications.

Between April 22-25, 1951, a Chinese push directed at Seoul met heavy resistance at Kapyong, held by the Canadians/Australians, and Imjin, defended by the British 29th Brigade. The British were heavily outnumbered and the 29th held for three days before being forced back. The 1st Gloucestershire Regiment made a last stand on Hill 235 and was wiped out, the battalion later honoured with a US Presidential Unit Citation. Two VCs, one GC, four DSOs, five MCs and a MM went to British troops involved.

According to cabinet papers, the 29th suffered 1,091 casualties, 25% of its strength. The Glosters suffered 620 casualties alone and could muster only 217 men on April 27. Overall, 141 British soldiers died with 527 captured.



Lance Corporal Walter Cleveland, MM, at Southampton. He was one of the few men of the 1st Glosters to escape Imjin, and carried a wounded man for four miles across Chinese lines, September 1951 PA/TOPFOTO

It is believed Chinese casualties were between 10,000-15,000.

Imjin ended in a stalemate, enabling UN forces to retreat to positions they could hold. With the mobile phase of the conflict over, ground forces would contain the communists, while bombing and a naval blockade hoped to bring them to the table. A process began in July 1951, but until negotiations bore fruit BCFK troops defended key positions and participated in set-piece operations to maintain a largely static line.

41 RM Commando's raiders

One of the units operating outside BCFK command was 41 (Independent) Commando. Formed at US request in August 1950, it completed its first raid within two months.

Outfitted with US equipment and frequently deployed by submarine and fast boat, the 200-strong unit sabotaged infrastructure and communications. Its first action was at Inchon, launching a diversion to support the main landings. It then completed four raids in three weeks, becoming known as 'The Train Wreckers'. The Commandos later fought alongside the 1st US Marine Division at the Chosin Reservoir as the centre of a 1000-strong British-led UK/US task force.

In all, 41 Commando launched 18 raids, with 21 killed and 28 captured (ten of whom died in captivity) before disbanding in February 1952. It received a US Presidential Unit Citation in 1957.

4 VCs

Korea saw four VCs awarded. The first went posthumously to Major Kenneth Muir of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. On September 23, 1950, he organised the evacuation of wounded men from Hill 282, before taking command, forming a small force to counterattack and personally taking over a mortar before he was mortally wounded.

Korea's second VC came at Imjin, bestowed on Lieutenant-Colonel James Carne of the Glosters. Central to defence was the coolness of Carne, who moved between positions and led two assault groups. He also organised the break-out, but was captured.

The third VC was posthumous and also from Imjin. Lieutenant Philip Curtis of The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry led a counterattack during which he was wounded. Breaking free of his own men to attempt a second attack, he was killed just yards from his objective.

The final VC went to Private William Speakman of the Black Watch (attached 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers). On November 4, 1951, he decided to drive the enemy off a position it was about to overrun, gathering grenades and six men to lead rushes. He led ten such charges, even when wounded – only accepting treatment after a direct order – and held until his company could withdraw.

Returned British POWs of the Glosters show affection for their former CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Carne VC, after his repatriation to a British Commonwealth Reception Centre in Japan, September 1953 TOPFOTO



978 POWs... and 1 strange Olympics

According to Hansard, 978 British soldiers became POWs. Mistreatment, torture and mock executions were common, with only the minimum of supplies going to POWs. In 1955, the government stated that 71 British prisoners had died in captivity with 13 men missing.

The men were marched hundreds of miles to reach simple camps on the Yalu river, isolated facilities with little need for fences and towers. The communists attempted to 'brainwash' prisoners, offering improved conditions for those responding to 're-education'. Generally, ideological conversion was unsuccessful – just 40 British were indoctrinated and one, Royal Marine Andrew Condron, remained in China until 1962.

The two GCs awarded to British troops in Korea went to POWs captured at Imjin, including a posthumous award to Lieutenant Terrence Waters of the West Yorkshire Regiment, who ordered his comrades to falsely accede to co-operation while he remained behind alone, "aware that the task of maintaining British prestige was vested in him."

The communists organised a 'Camp Olympics', ostensibly to show that POWs were well-treated. According to historian Mark Felton, they were gathered at Pyoktong in November 1952 for one of the strangest sporting



British POWs in a North Korean camp, guarded by Chinese soldiers, 1951 TOPFOTO

events staged. British, American, South Korean, Turkish, French, Filipino and Dutch POWs formed teams in track-and-field events, football, boxing, wrestling, American football, softball and tug-of-war. They also entertained dignitaries and left-leaning journalists, but those who objected or spoiled put-on interviews were denied basic care. At least one British NCO succumbed to disease after a row with a British Communist Party *Daily Worker* journalist, Felton said.

With the armistice, POWs were permitted to choose what side of the 38th Parallel they remained on. Up to 25,000 North Koreans stayed in the south and 21 Americans joined Condron in the north.

Rank 3 in losses

The Korean War claimed the lives of 2,035 BCFK personnel, including 1,129 British. After the Malayan Emergency and Northern Ireland, it ranks third highest in post-war British military fatalities, the ferocity of the conflict clear given its relative brevity when compared to the two aforementioned multi-decade campaigns.

In 2014, a bronze Portland stone and Welsh slate memorial was unveiled

by the Duke of Gloucester in Victoria Embankment Gardens, London, gifted by South Korea. A memorial was also unveiled in 2000 in Beecraigs, Scotland.

British forces are also commemorated by the Gloucester Hill Battle Monument in Korea and 886 British war dead are buried in the UN Memorial Cemetery in Busan. Since 1953, three British veterans have also been interred/cast there, including Bill Speakman VC.

1 uneasy armistice

In the last three months of the conflict, 200,000 soldiers became casualties, two-thirds of which were communist. The fighting continued into the final hours as the Chinese tried to secure territorial advantages ahead of the ceasefire.

The Korean Armistice Agreement, the longest negotiated armistice in history, was signed at 10am on July 27, 1953. Sporadic fighting and shelling continued until it came into force 12 hours later, with Commonwealth artillery batteries firing 1,300 shells in counterbattery work that day.

Within three days, both sides had retreated the required demarcation distance to form the famous Demilitarized Zone. BCFK engineers worked until September clearing mines, demolishing old positions and constructing new defences. The last British forces withdrew in August 1957,



while Australia's 3 RAR returned home in September 1954 after nine years overseas – the last Australians overall leaving in March 1956.

Some 2½-3 million people died, with minimal territorial changes. Korea remains the most major test of the UN's military faculties, and the uneasy truce has held, surviving hundreds of violations. The conflict is technically

ongoing as efforts pursuing a peaceful settlement have repeatedly failed.

Some 28,000 US troops remain 'in theatre' and a recent deal will see US nuclear missile submarines deploy to the region in response to North's development of nuclear weapons. The North Korean people continue to suffer the mechanisms of a state concerned only with its continuity.

IMAGE *of* WAR

LIFESAVING LANCASTER

A&AEE Boscombe Down, Wiltshire, circa 1948

Before 1941, a ditched RAF airman had a 20% chance of rescue. That summer, the Air Sea Rescue Service increased this to 35% with more effective co-ordination and the forming of dedicated ASR squadrons. It also conceptualised air-dropped lifeboats to provide ditched crews with a seaworthy vessel. Uffa

Fox designed the first – a self-righting craft with small motors, sails and survival equipment – in 1941. The boats were deployed by parachute from 700ft with the first operational drop made on May 5, 1943. Four variants were made for carriage beneath various aircraft – the largest being the Mk.III, developed in 1948 for the Shackleton. Post-war, with shortages of search aircraft, some Lancasters were converted to ASR.III and GR.3 standard, carrying Mk.IIA lifeboats. These were supplanted by the Shackleton and the airborne lifeboat was edged out by helicopter rescue in the 1960s.

CHRIS GOSS

BRITAIN
AT WAR





RAF Biggin Hill Museum & Chapel

REVISITED

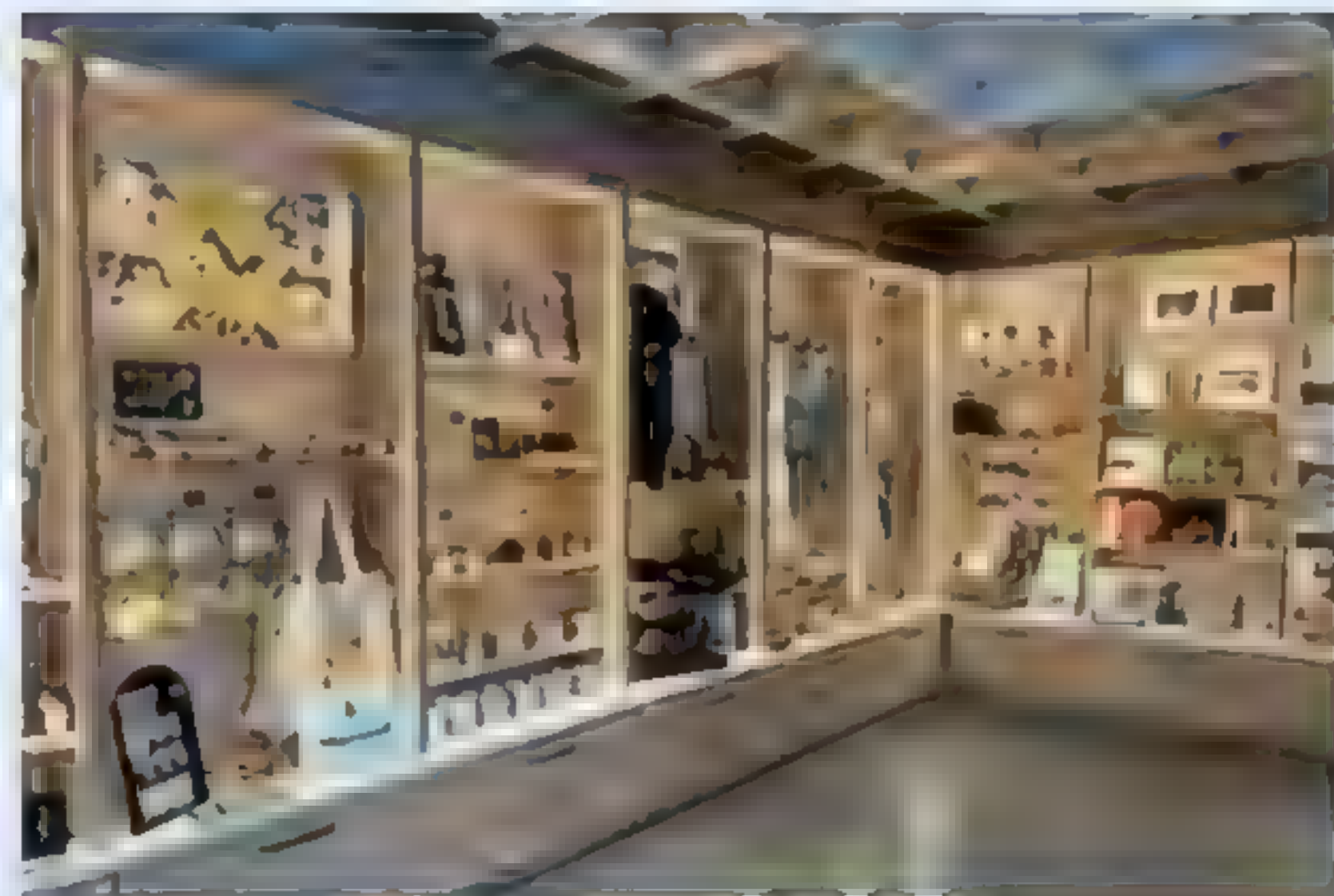
It's a poignant dedication to one of the most important historic aviation sites in Britain: RAF Biggin Hill Museum & Chapel. **Tom Baker** went to the Kent facility to see what has changed since our last visit

At 10.20am, on November 11, 1918, radio transmitters across France broadcast an official communiqué. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, heard only coarsely over the sound of grainy static, proudly announced the Armistice of Compiègne.

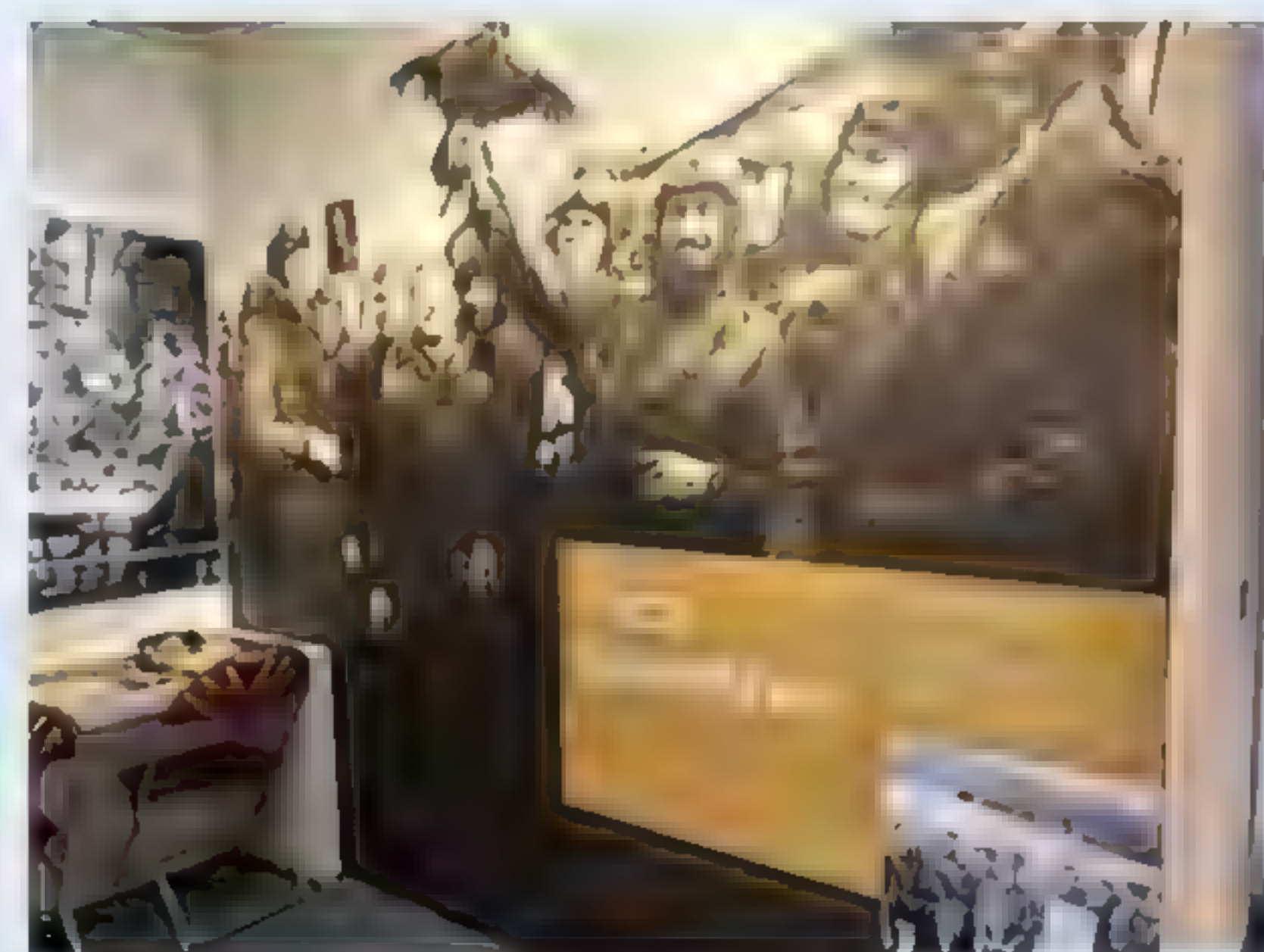
World War One, after 52 exhausting months of campaigning, would end at the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month. As muted reactions swept across the Front, dominated by an atmosphere of silent emptiness, a wireless operator of 141 Squadron excitedly tuned his receiver to detect an incoming transmission from a station within the Eiffel Tower.

Picking up Lloyd George's message, he hastily forwarded the communication on. Shortly thereafter, the church bells of Westerham and Cudham, both in Kent, were the first in England to peal illustrious chimes of triumph.

RAF Biggin Hill, 141 Squadron's then home, the Wireless Experimental Establishment and the pioneering activities of radio development had



The well stocked gift shop



A display depicting the history of Biggin Hill's very own 141 Squadron



to RAF Biggin Hill
Museum and Chapel
IMAGES: TOM BAKER/KEY
UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED

become the first location in Britain to learn of Allied victory. Truly, as Winston Churchill would state a quarter of a century later, Biggin Hill was Britain's "strongest link".

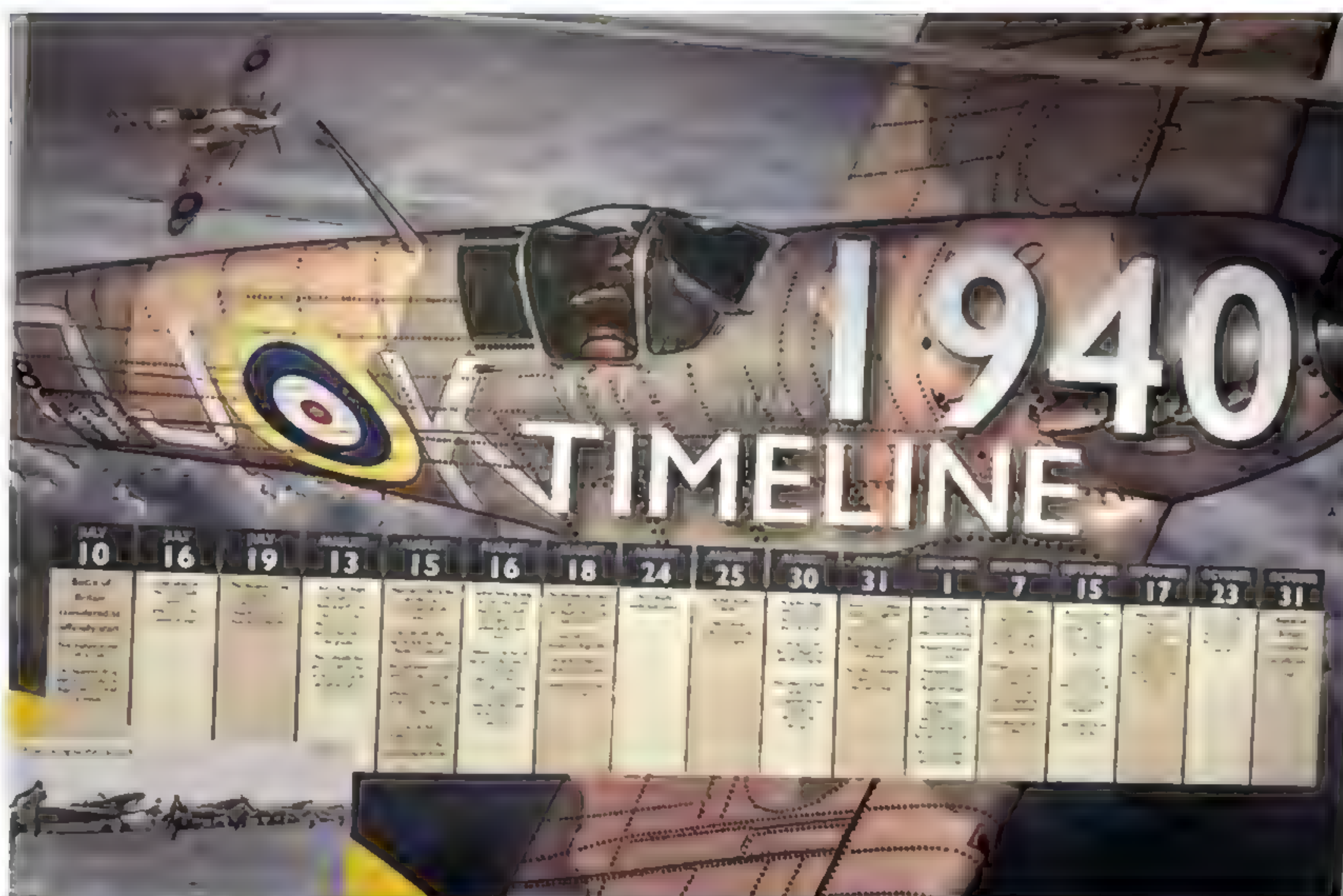
Although Biggin Hill was famed for its ground-breaking activities in the development of wireless communications, the interwar period would see the site pioneer another experimental technology under the watchful eye of Professor Henry Tizard – Range and Direction Finding, or as it would later be known – radar. However, Biggin Hill's distinguishing historical feature was perhaps its contribution to the Battle of Britain.

Serving as the principal RAF fighter base in the North Kent/South London area, fighters based at the station claimed in excess of 1,400 German aircraft over the course of the war, for the loss of 453 airmen – all commemorated in the nearby Grade II-listed chapel.

Community support

Four years ago, years of fundraising culminated in Bromley Council's creation of a structure on the site of the former air base – commemorating the history of RAF Biggin Hill. You may recall that *Britain at War* visited the fledgling museum at a time when workmen were still completing the finishing touches, to learn just how the site would chronicle the personal stories of those who flew and fought at the airfield over its years of existence. The former Biggin Hill Memorial Museum took 16 months to construct and cost £5.3m. The generous support of the community, combined with awards from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, enabled the museum to be completed in 2019.

However, stories of success are too often

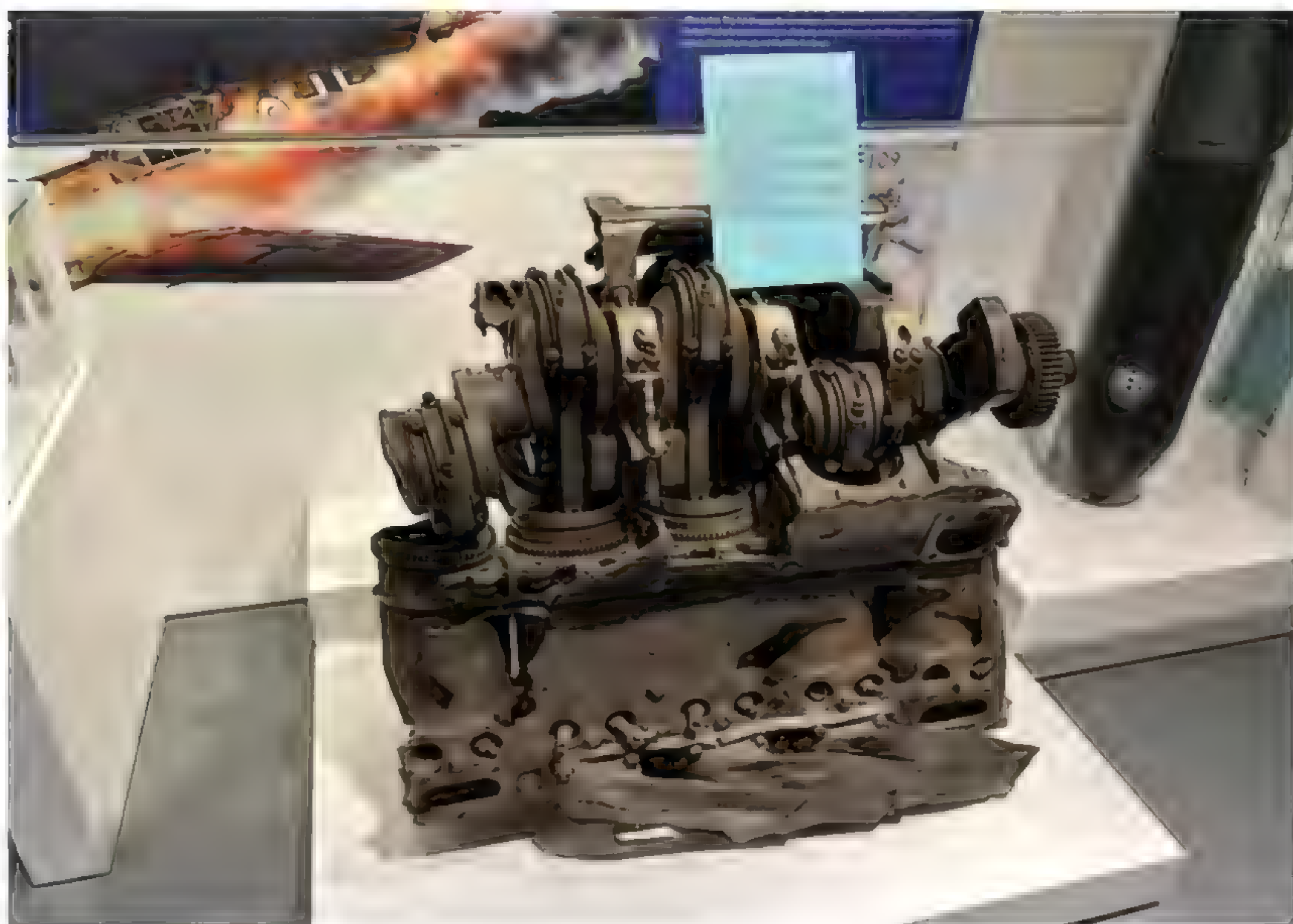


ABOVE: There are many updated or new additions, such as this interactive display

TOP: Biggin Hills' contribution to the Battle of Britain is featured throughout the museum

ABOVE RIGHT: Several artefacts, like this transmitter, depict Biggin Hills' contribution to the development of technology

BELOW: One of the highlights of the museum is an original German Bf 109 engine



marred by low points. Unfortunately, Biggin Hill was no exception, as COVID-19 restrictions took their toll on the nascent attraction, forcing it to close its doors for an extended period. Despite restrictions easing through 2022, visitor numbers remained low throughout the museum sector. Thus, Bromley Council and the team at the Biggin Hill Memorial Museum decided to undertake a new, major project this year.

After numerous donations and much work, Biggin Hill opened its doors in March 2023 with its new name: RAF Biggin Hill Museum & Chapel. Volunteer Dave Cole told *Britain at War*: "COVID was a tough time for us. It partially led to our decision to rebrand the museum and rejuvenate our collection here."

"It was time to rebrand it as people had started trickling away in the wake of COVID, and we felt it would be a fine way of getting people back to the museum."

Although the personal stories of Biggin Hill were, and still are, a principal focus of the site, the new collection has updated these narratives and now includes a variety of new exhibitions and displays. Dave said: "Before, the focus was purely on personal stories and the local community involvement during the wars. As of March, not only have we updated



A contemporary signed blackboard, taken from the local pub, featuring the signatures of pilots from Biggin Hill

these to include numerous interactive displays, but have created a multitude of highly modern exhibitions aimed at charting the extensive contribution of Biggin Hill to the development of technology and aviation in both World War One and World War Two."

Likewise, although the chapel has always served as a moving memorial since its construction in 1951, a string of new displays line its interior, adding a permanent gallery highlighting the contribution of women to the war effort.

Access to RAF Biggin Hill Museum & Chapel is via the main airport road and the entrance is flanked on either side by two striking, long-serving guardians of the airfield's history – a replica Spitfire Mk.IA and a Hurricane Mk.I. The centre has been designed with step-free access and is wheelchair friendly.

Entering the reception, visitors will notice the gift shop, cafeteria and toilets to the left. On the right, the revamped exhibition area charts the history of the former fighter station. The first display

Volunteer's favourite

Museum volunteer Dave Cole carefully considered his choice of favourite item before guiding me to an aged display cabinet. He said: "This cabinet shows a selection of items that once belonged to Wireless Officer Stanley Mockford. My favourite item here would have to be his watch, something that was used to assist him in his work with the Wireless Experimental Establishment, which was based here at Biggin Hill."

He added: "He spent his time here experimenting with wireless sets in aircraft during the Great War, before going on to work with the communications company Marconi."



Dale, Stanley Mockford's grandson, pictured with Dave's favourite item BIGGIN HILL MUSEUM

on view is a large-scale 1946-dated aerial map of RAF Biggin Hill, accompanied by an updated original display that adds the background to the history and showcases numerous small artefacts.

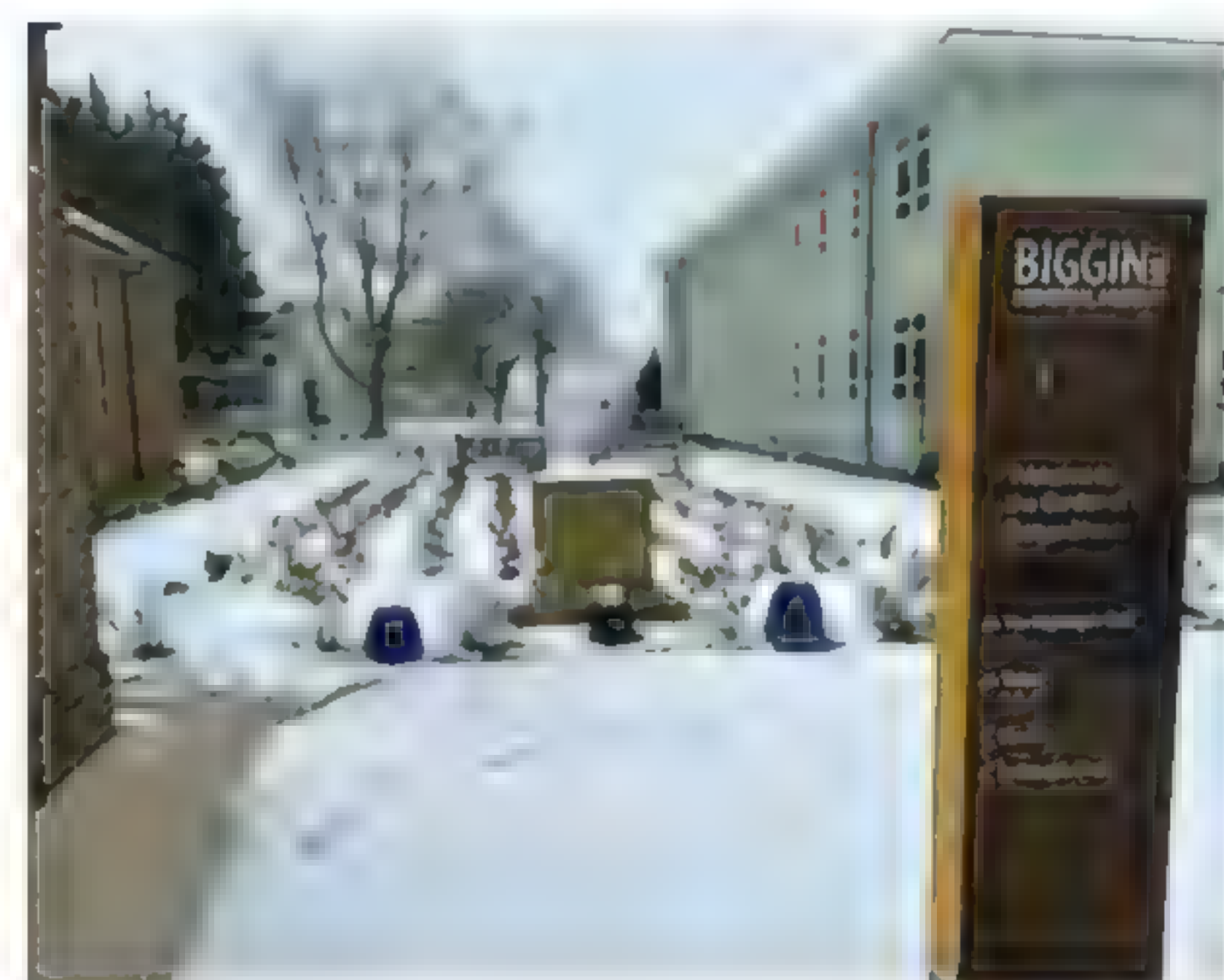
Moving on, backlit displays explore the stories of veterans with strong links to the station, before the galleries give way to 'the other side of Biggin Hill', those men and women who served at the airfield in one of the many anti-aircraft units. Of particular interest here are medals of Gunner Bill Elliott, who manned the 3.7in guns that once defended the airfield.

Throughout, visitors will find exhibitions depicting the development of wireless and radar, supported with a multitude of fascinating objects. However, the highlight perhaps are the new additions. Guests will find an original engine from a downed Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighter aircraft, information on the first secret radar interception, a 50kg bomb, previously unseen POW papers and logbooks and a mock-up of a 1940s-style British living room – complete with air raid shelter!

Exciting future

It is set to be a big year for the Kent-based museum, volunteer Dave Cole said: "We are looking forward to hosting many events this year. One of the most exciting is our engine demonstration day. We have previously hosted this and it proved to be popular. Guests will be able to start up various engine types"

The RAF Biggin Hill Museum & Chapel is a small attraction, but it nevertheless packs a punch. Much has changed since the site first opened its doors back in 2019 and, as such, this poignant dedication to one of the most important historic aviation sites in Britain, possibly even all of Europe, is more than worth an afternoons visit. **BW**



The memorial garden, outside of the museum



The chapel features numerous galleries dedicated to charting the experience of women at Biggin Hill

Visitor information

RAF Biggin Hill Museum & Chapel is open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm. The last admission to the museum is at 4pm.

Admission: Booking in advance is not required. Adult, £7.50; Child, £4; Family (two adults and up to four children), £15; Concession (60+), £7. Further membership prices can be found on the museum's website. Free entry for children under five.

Address: RAF Biggin Hill Museum & Chapel, Main Road, Biggin Hill, Kent, TN16 3EJ

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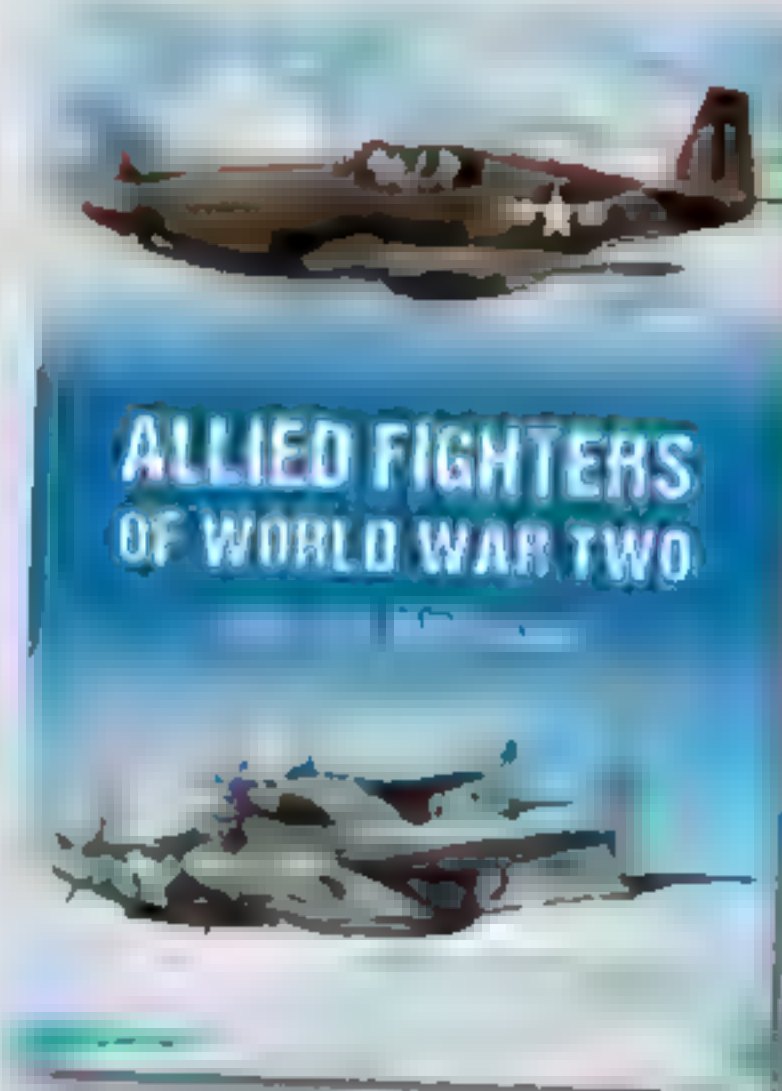
Please note: This is a new book edition of *Aeroplane Collectors' Archive: British Fighters of World War 2* and *Aeroplane Special Aviation Archive: US Fighters of World War II*

Fighter aircraft truly came of age during the World War Two era and many of these machines passed into legend: Spitfire, Hurricane, Mustang, Thunderbolt.

The Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire were famously instrumental in the Battle of Britain, but Britain continued to produce standout fighters, including the Hawker Typhoon and Tempest, Bristol Beaufighter and de Havilland Mosquito. They all made their contribution to the war effort and Allied success.

After Pearl Harbor, the US had less time to build up its reserves since all resources had been focused on supplying aircraft across the Atlantic. Despite this, some manufacturers were well placed to start production on some of the most famous American aircraft of the war: the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, Lockheed P-38 Lightning, Republic P-47 Thunderbolt and North American P-51 Mustang.

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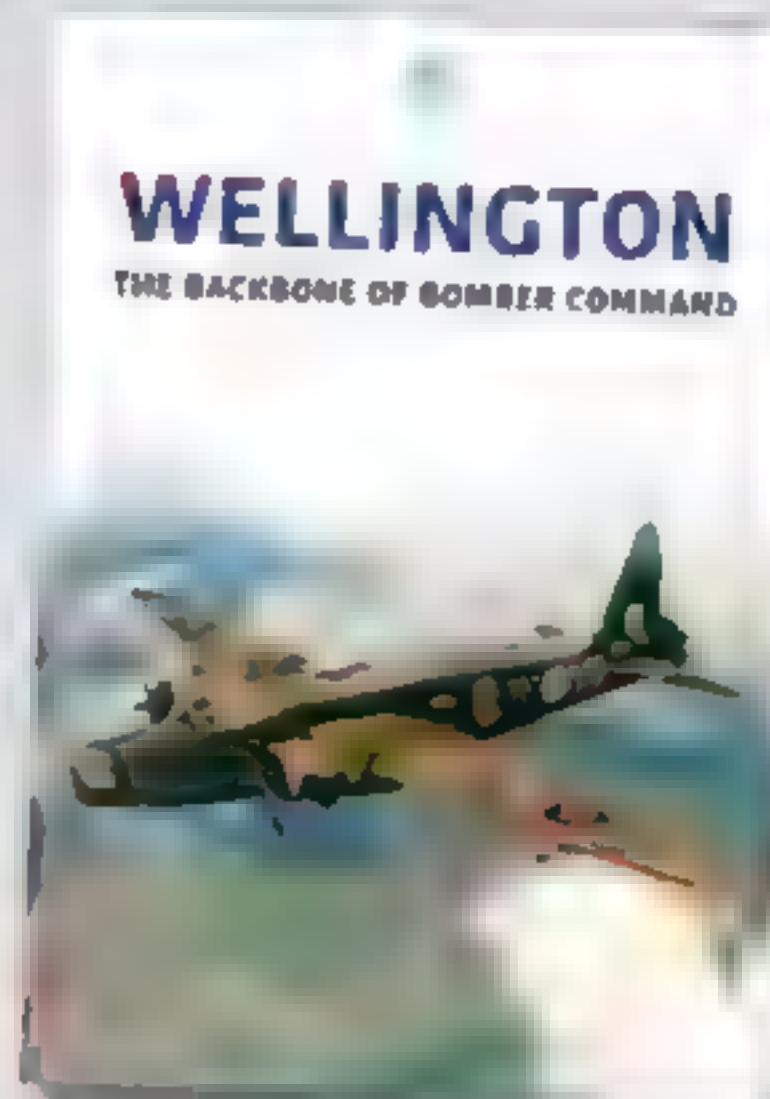
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In 1932, the British Air Ministry issued Specification B.9/32 for a twin-engined day bomber. Key to its design success was the removal of all restrictions on the unladen weight of aircraft, enabling designers to select a powerplant suitable for the designated role of the aircraft. Also significant was the development of the revolutionary geodetic construction method, which allowed a traditional fabric-covered skin to clothe an innovative super-strength 'basket woven' aircraft skeleton.

The Wellington had the potential to carry nine 500lb bombs or nine 250lb bombs for long-range attack and was declared one of the most advanced aircraft of the day. Throughout its lifespan, 19 different marks were developed, including many sub variants for a variety of roles. The Wellington's contribution to Britain's war effort was remarkable, initially providing the backbone for Bomber Command and remaining in service throughout the entire war.

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The Guards

Author/editor: David Reynolds

Britain's Brigade of Guards comprises five regiments of foot guards living what their members call 'red and green lives'. Wearing their iconic red tunics, they are masters of ceremonial precision, but these elite troops are equally effective on the frontline. Collectively, 'The Guards' include the Coldstream, the Grenadiers, the Scots, the Irish, and Welsh Guards – all of whom have histories stretching back to the 1600s.

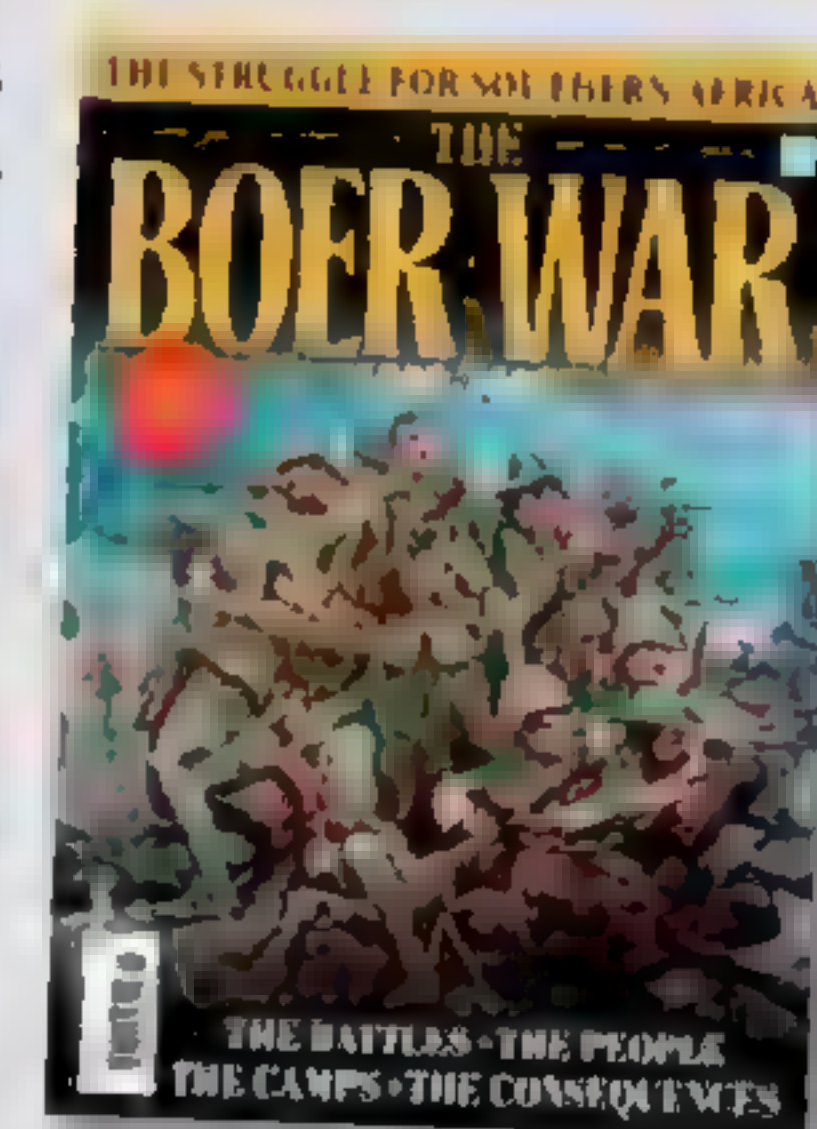
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Guinness and gremlins

Tucked away in the war diary of the 48th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, is a half-sheet of foolscap that reveals the intriguing story behind the 21st Tank Brigade's adoption of a radical new badge in the summer of 1944.

You might expect that the British Army would be quite staid when it came to the design of its badges and insignia. After all, the cap badge is the main symbol that soldiers display to attest their membership of any unit and engender pride and loyalty – much more so than the formation signs typically worn on one or both sleeves to signify a unit's parent corps, division and/or brigade.

Changing insignia is quite a common occurrence, usually due to earned battle honours or to signify mergers and amalgamations, but sometimes these changes are a little more 'on trend'. Take the jerboa that, from 1940, appeared on the badges of the 7th Armoured Division, a cheeky nod to their famous reputation as the Desert Rats.

So how did it come to pass that the 21st Tank Brigade adopted a gremlin as the symbol of their unit?

A rare event

Formed in 1939 as the 21st Army Tank Brigade, the unit was re-designated in April 1942. Initially it sported a yellow diabolio, the standard shape for such a brigade, but an amendment to GHQ Signs from June 1941 noted that the marking was to change from yellow to blue. What prompted this unusual, possibly unique, alteration remains a mystery.

One influence on the evolution of insignia was the change from a



How an advert for a world-famous beer inspired the insignia of the British Army's 21st Tank Brigade as it fought up Italy's spine

WORDS: JOHN A SMITH

professional British Army to the civilian conscript force that had spent years renewing battle-hardened conviction. At the start of the war the fabled love of amateurism influenced the style of much British insignia. Rarely was there a badge of fierce aspect.

Not until the experience of battle had passed did more martial designs appear. The 1st Armoured Division kept its rhinoceros marking throughout World War Two, but this began as a rather plodding pedestrian motif that, mid-war, evolved into a charging rhino more befitting the role of the armoured division. Similarly,



Churchills of 21st Tank Brigade cross the River Reno close to a destroyed railway bridge near Bastia, April 1945. The unit's unique insignia can just be seen, beneath mud, on the lower glacis IWM/GETTY

Trooper Bud Langstaffe of 48 RTR wearing the original blue diabolio of the 21st Tank Brigade above the Royal Armoured Corps arm of service strip
ALL IMAGES VIA THE AUTHOR UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE



"Changing insignia is quite a common occurrence, usually due to earned battle honours or to signify mergers and amalgamations, but sometimes these changes are a little more 'on trend'"



GREMLINS IN ITALY

the 49th Infantry Division retained its polar bear, but this transitioned from a placid creature with its head bowed to one with its head raised as if to roar its strength.

An alternative to demonstrating martial prowess was to take a nonchalant approach, using humour to instil bravado. The badge of the 253rd Sub-Area, a communications unit supporting IV Corps in Burma, is not unusual in sporting an elephant as its formation sign. What's amusing is how it applied the design as a base unit, depicting an elephant's rear-end!

Three factors can influence a wholesale change of insignia: the unit's esprit de corps, the commanding officer's fancy and the War Office. While the War Office might take a dim view of any insignia that might prove too radical or potentially offensive, its influence diminished with distance. Put simply, a unit serving in faraway Burma could get away with a lot more than one on the home front.

All of the above went into the 21st Tank Brigade's redesign. While evolutions in design were not uncommon, radical changes were, and evidence for quite what influenced its commander, Brigadier Charles Firth DSO, is buried in the archives or lost to history.

The brigade was one of only three units to make a wholesale change to the design of their insignia during the war. The others were the 25th Tank Brigade, which made the more moderate change from a black diabolo to one mounted on a red shield, and the 34th Tank Brigade, which gave up its diabolo and adopted a redesign comprising a mace grasped by a knight's gauntlet on a red shield with a yellow diagonal stripe. Perhaps all three units felt the diabolo to be on the plain side? Or it could be that Firth simply took the opportunity of the unit's transfer to Italy to make a change.

Whatever the case, the timetable was swift, with the process from inspiration to production taking just two months.

The Blue Devils

While the War Office might be tolerant of making a change to a unit's identity, it was particularly strict on one point: cost. Public funds would not be used to pay for non-essential changes.

The army operated a mechanism by which expenditure for such items could be covered by the President of the Regimental Institute (PRI), the

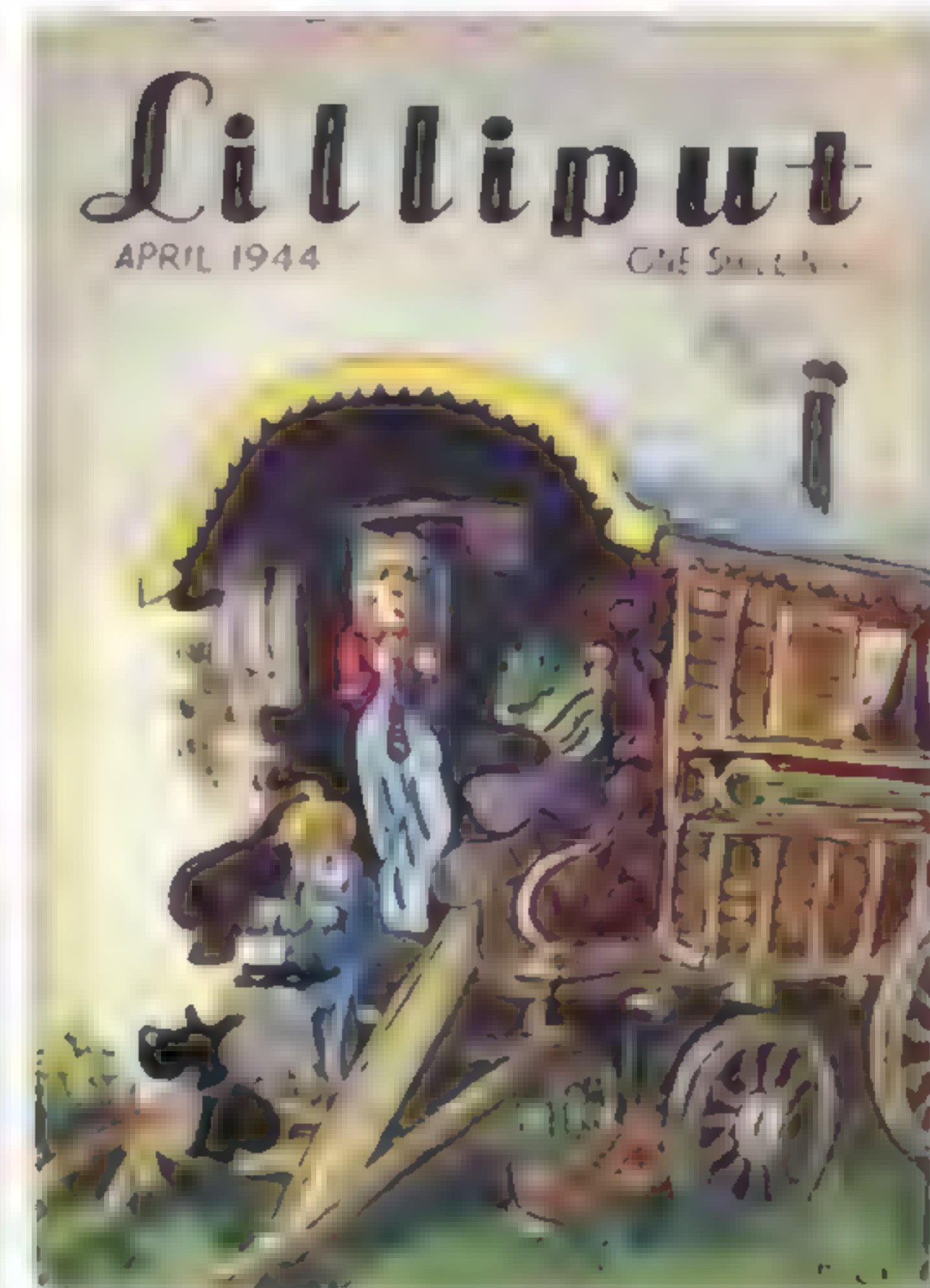


position held by a senior officer who answered to the CO, as it was the latter who was responsible for the use of regimental funds. PRI funds were non-public and intended for welfare provision, buying and selling items to enhance regimental funds and to obtain items that soldiers need or want, but which are not provided by the taxpayer.

In May 1944, the 21st was encamped at various locations in

The April 1944 edition of *Lilliput* carried a black-and-white version of the Guinness ad, a possible source of Captain Achurch's inspiration

The advertisement thought to have inspired Captain Achurch in May 1944
GUINNESS ARCHIVE, DIAGEO IRELAND



Apulia in Italy. Of its three regiments and HQ, the 48th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment (RTR), had the favoured billet and could be found in the fields north of the picturesque town of Troia, famed for one of Italy's finest rose windows in its 12th-century cathedral. Brigade HQ was camped outside Biccari, six miles to the northwest, while 12 RTR and 145th Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps, were further out in the countryside north of Biccari and Troia respectively.

After landing in Italy, the brigade moved to this area to train around the ranges at Troia, including taking part in a series of exercises that had been given the name 'Gremlin'. This has led to the assumption that the new insignia had been inspired



by Exercise Gremlin, whereas the reverse was true: it was the insignia that had led to the naming of the exercise. In the same confused vein, Brigadier Dawnay DSO received credit for initiating the redesign when it was really his predecessor, Firth, who had instigated it.

The 21st Tank Brigade had sailed from Bône in Algeria, docking in the port of Naples on May 3, 1944, its HQ section and all three tank regiments landing on that day. Over the next week they moved off to various staging areas, prior to travelling to their new camps. All the encampments were tented – something the men were used to, having lived for almost a year in tented camps around Penthievre, 20 miles southwest of Bône.

On May 15, the brigade travelled by rail from Casoria to Troia, with regimental HQs being opened from May 17. A particularly important arrangement was the establishing of an officers' mess, and it was in the officers' mess of 48 RTR on May 17/18 that Lieutenant Raymond Scott, the brigade liaison officer, showed the officers a new design that Firth had produced, which incorporated a blue devil due to the brigade having earned the nickname 'Blue Devils'. Firth's design was unanimously rejected by the group.

However, a magazine that was lying in the officer's mess that day provided

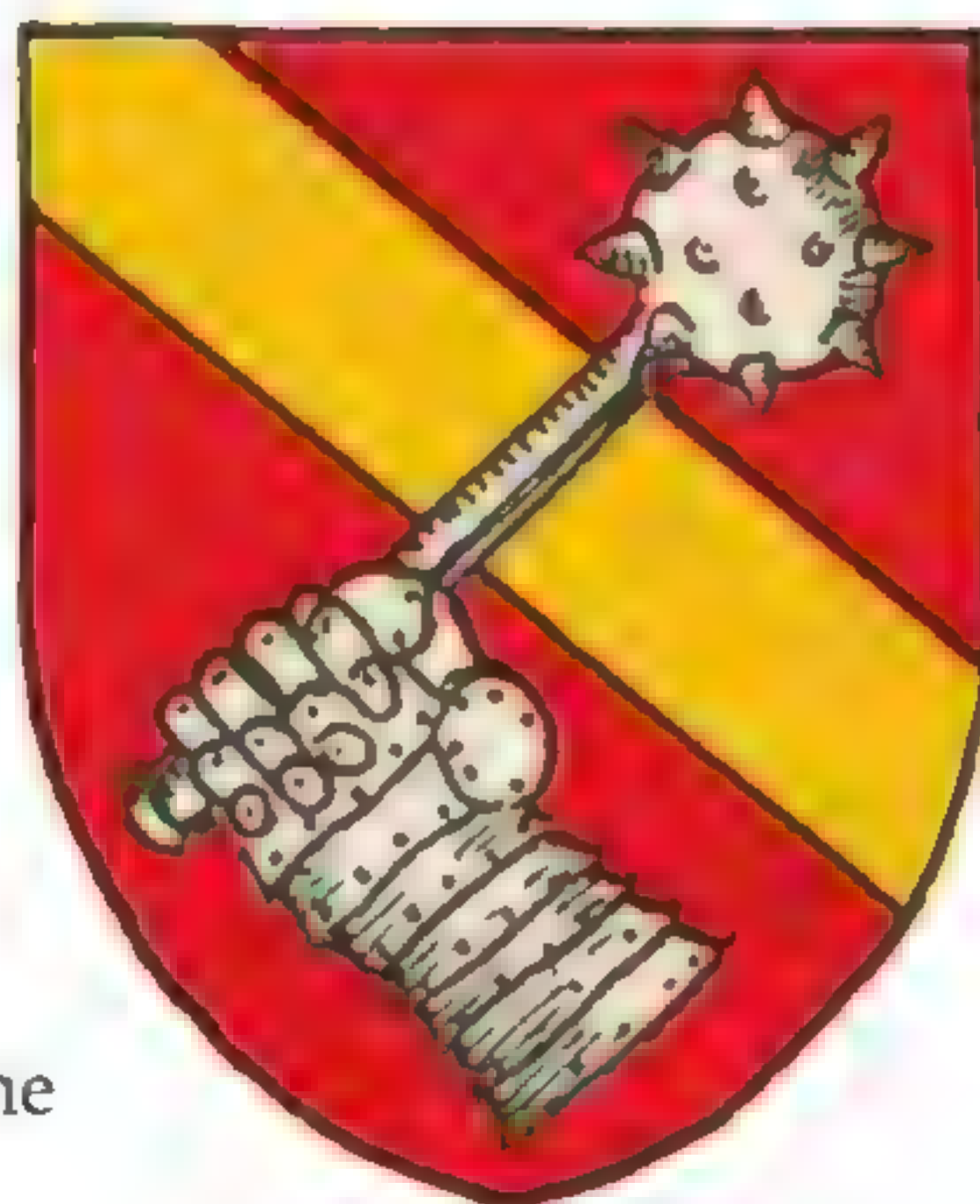


the 'eureka' moment for the assembled officers.

Papers from home

Exactly which magazine Captain Brian Achurch of 'A' Squadron, 48 RTR, was reading in the mess that May has not been recorded, but within it was the inspirational advertisement. At the time, British magazines and newspapers were running the latest campaign for Guinness, Dublin's iconic dry stout, which incorporated a pair of mischievous gremlins.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'gremlin' as RAF slang for a mischievous imp imagined as the cause of mechanical mishaps to aircraft. More generally, such a creature is regarded as the blame for any unforeseen mischance, with the first recorded usage being in *Britain at War's* sister title, *Aeroplane* in 1929. Such an evocative sprite was natural inspiration for author Roald Dahl, whose first book, *The Gremlins*, was published for Walt Disney in 1943. The concept of gremlins was growing



The 21st was not the only brigade to change its insignia. These sketches track the dramatic alterations made by the 34th Tank Brigade in late 1944

The HQ Squadron, 48 RTR, in May 1945. The men wear on their upper sleeves the gremlin formation sign mounted on a khaki drill backing patch

as a cultural reference and inspired the Guinness campaign. The advert appeared in at least four different magazines; *Lilliput's* April edition, *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* from April 28, *The Illustrated London News* from May 6 and *The Tatler* from May 17, though given its publication date the last of these must be an unlikely candidate.

It was in *The Illustrated London News* that the ad was perhaps most prominent: a full-page colour version by H M Bateman on page two, showing two startled RAF pilots whose beers had been swiped by gremlins, along with the slogan "My Goodness – My GUINNESS!"

The ad gave Achurch the germ of an idea and he suggested replacing the beer glasses with the brigade diablo. However, Achurch was a brewer by trade, so it fell to Lieutenant Henry 'Tom' Gorrington, a commercial artist, to translate the idea into an actual illustration. His two square inch stylised interpretation of a red gremlin grinning around the blue diablo was drawn up on toilet paper – by happenstance the brand was Bromo, favoured by Howard Carter of Tutankhamun fame.

What makes 21st Brigade's insignia so distinctive is its comic nature. Other formations had strong designs featuring tigers, panthers, wyverns and charging bulls, all with an expected martial ferocity, but the





gremlin outdid them all in boldness. One of the most striking features was its cheeky grin, perhaps reflecting the battle-weary but confident nature of the experienced men.

The time taken from Bromo drawing to silk-woven badge was rapid and, in all likelihood, the officers involved found it a welcome distraction. Gorrings design was taken to 48 RTR's CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Hutchison, who approved it and arranged for it to go to brigade.

Firth returned home on May 19 and his replacement, David Dawnay, the previous commander of the North Irish Horse, arrived on May 22. He set up a brigade conference for May 24, where, among the more serious matter of discussing plans for fighting the Germans, it was agreed that the new badge would be produced in Britain and a decision made on which uniforms it was to be worn.

A good motorcycle

Five days later, the brigade's security liaison officer, Captain A Whitehead, travelled to Allied Forces HQ in Caserta to seek approval for the new badge. This was a considerable undertaking for an ostensibly minor matter, as the 110-mile route encompassed blown bridges, cratered roads and uncleared battlefields.

The first recorded reference of the new insignia being used was as the painted design adorning brigade

ABOVE: Bromo toilet paper – the material used by Lieutenant Gorrings to produce his working design

RIGHT: The formation sign for 21st Tank Brigade manufactured at the silk factory. Produced in left- and right-facing variants, the simple lines were easily reproduced by the De Negri family

vehicles. Orders instructing the change were issued on June 6, just three weeks from the meeting in the officers' mess.

Two miles north of the Allied HQ at the Caserta Royal Palace was the San Leucio Royal Mansion with its silk factory, and someone had the idea to get the badges for clothing manufactured there instead of back in Britain. In June, officers visited the silk factory and met the owners, the De Negri family, who had been making fine fabrics since 1790.

On July 10, the liaison officer from 48 RTR was sent to confirm

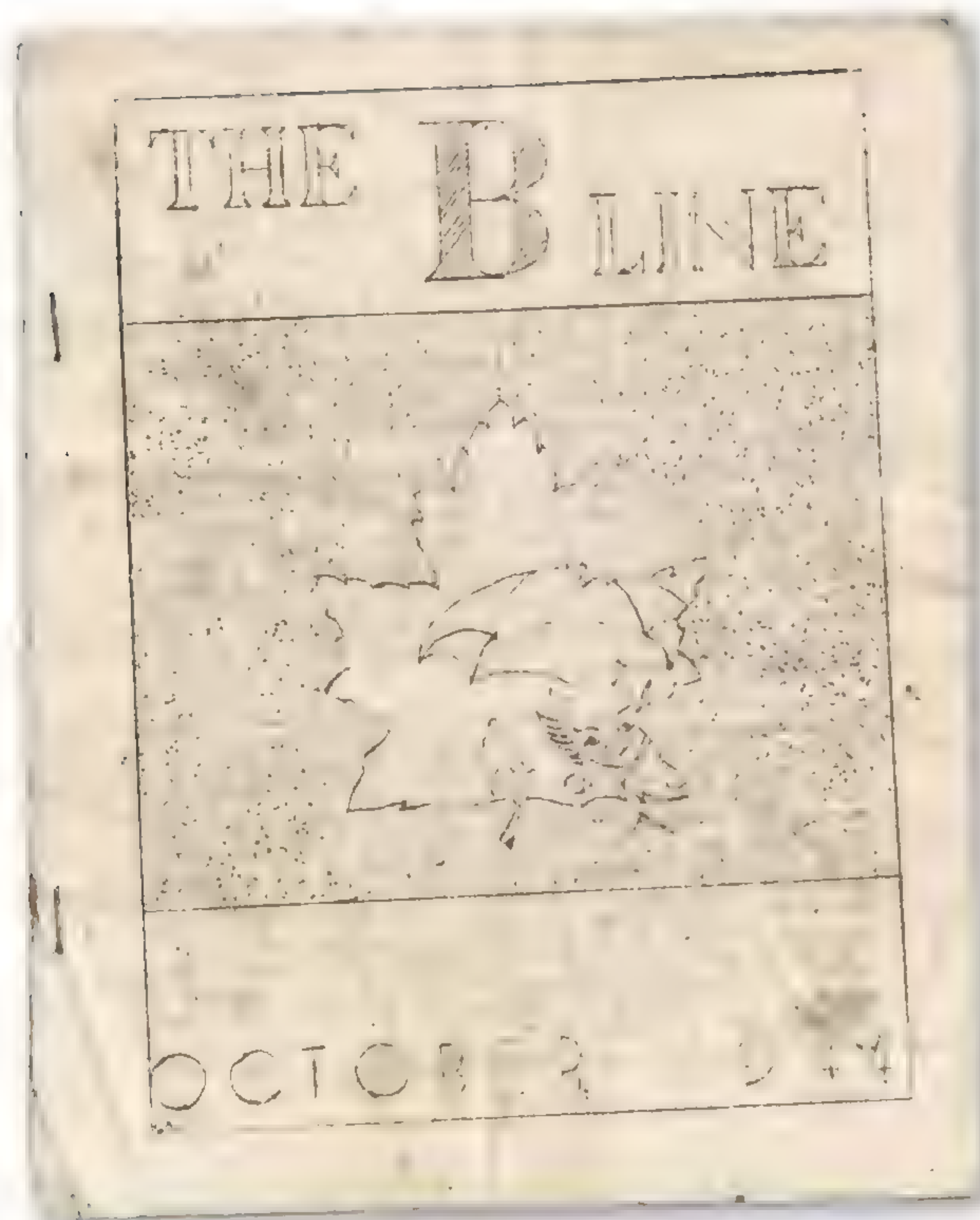


“Achurch had the germ of an idea... However, he was a brewer by trade, so it fell to Lieutenant Henry Gorrings, a commercial artist, to translate the idea on a sheet of toilet paper”

the order for several thousand badges. The war diary is not clear as to who he was, but it was likely Captain Maurice Ladd, identified by Peter Gudgin, author of the 48 RTR regimental history, as the officer who arranged for the badges to be manufactured. Ladd was an avuncular-looking Gloucestershire man in his late 20s and one of the few men to serve with 48 RTR throughout the war. He was later chosen to represent them in the Victory Parade in London in 1946. No information about the order can be gleaned because the original factory closed down in the 1960s and its old documents were destroyed.



Major 'Bill' Joss outside his casa. He could be attending to squadron business or perhaps engaged with a copy of *The B Line*?



The silk badges were worn by the Brigade HQ plus the three regiments and attached troops such as REME. The late war necessity to reduce the number of regiments and redistribute men to others meant that 145 RAC was disbanded in December 1944 and the North Irish Horse were brought in, adding one more unit to those sporting the gremlin insignia. The fact that two subtly different examples of badge exist suggests a further order was placed to fulfil the needs of the newcomers.

A tank brigade at this stage of the war numbered approximately 3,000 men. If the Middle East General Order 1455 had been followed and an extra 10% to cover

reinforcements ordered, this would give an approximate order of 3,300 badge sets. The war diary for 145 RAC records that the bill for their own badges from their PRI fund amounted to 44,000 Italian lire, with the exchange rate being 400 lire to the pound.

Each regiment required 770 sets and each PRI fund paid for one set to be issued to men ranked from trooper to corporal. All ranks above corporal were charged 2s 6d each. Assuming each element paid in proportion, it would have amounted to a contract worth approximately £500 to the De Negri family – the cost of a Harley-Davidson or Norton combination motorcycle.

Two front covers of *The B Line*. The first shows the 1st Canadian Division's red patch with the gremlin peeking out from underneath an umbrella. The second is the Christmas issue, again featuring the gremlin. Major Joss hand-coloured each copy with watercolours

An aerial view across to Caserta Royal Palace with the San Leucio silk factory nestled below Monte San Leucio on the left-hand side ALINARI/ TOPFOTO

Fighting to the pub

The brigade was soon in action for the first time since its gruelling campaign in Tunisia. The 21st became part of I Canadian Corps in July and took on new vehicles, Churchill Mk.Vs and turretless Stuart tanks. At this time, perhaps indicative of its constant need for replacement vehicles, the regiments fielded a mix of Sherman tanks and Churchill Mk.IVs, Mk.Vs and NA75s (originally 6-pounder armed tanks refitted with guns taken from damaged Shermans). Only in January 1945, after a full complement of Churchill Mk.VIIs had been received, could the brigade rationalise. It was re-designated



GREMLINS IN ITALY

as the 21st Armoured Brigade the following June.

Gremlin-marked tanks went into action supporting the Canadian assault on the Gothic Line on August 31, 1944. Fighting as part of Operation Olive, one of the largest battles to take place during the Italian campaign, the tanks were needed to support the infantry and knock out some of the 2,000 or so fortified positions ahead of them. For the Canadians and their Gremlin escorts, the focus was on Rimini. In the words of British Eighth Army's CO, Lieutenant-General Sir Oliver Leese, it was "one of the hardest battles of Eighth Army. The fighting was comparable to El Alamein, Mareth and Monte Cassino."

After its armoured regiments returned from detachments to support other units, the 21st was on the move again in the last weeks of the war in Europe, joining V Corps for Operation Grapeshot, the bitter final push through the Po Valley.

Throughout all this, the unit displayed its unconventional insignia. Moreover, the design was ideal for print. Unit newsletters such as *The B Line*, produced by 'B' Squadron, 48 RTR, incorporated the design. The squadron CO, Major Cecil Alexander Joss, took over producing the covers from the September 1944 issue, demonstrating humour by providing his peeping gremlin with an umbrella,

The industrial section of the silk factory, built as a unique social experiment in the 18th century and owned by the De Negri family
FERDINANDO PIEZZI/
ALAMY



a wry comment on the turn in the Italian weather. His tenure as cover designer ran until December and, for Christmas, he again incorporated the gremlin, this time atop the spring of a jack-in-the-box. Not only did he create the designs while running a tank squadron, but he hand-coloured every one of the 150 copies.

Elsewhere, the 107th Company, RASC, named their newsletter *The Gremlin*, complete with the eponymous figure in the masthead. *Two Types* cartoonist William 'Jon' Jones designed a Christmas card incorporating the badge.

As popular as the Guinness gremlin may have been, it was shortlived, being worn for little over a year until the brigade was disbanded in

September 1945, ending the badge's existence as a formation sign. Apart from a few soldiers posted on that may well have retained their badges, it disappeared from the British Army.

However, the story doesn't quite end there. The gremlin was retained for a while in one guise. In the port of Cesenatico, south of Ravenna, was The Allied Officers' Club. Above its entrance was a traditional pub sign bearing the name 'Gremel Inn', colourfully decorated with the 21st Tank Brigade's diablo and gremlin. Perhaps as a nod to the original inspiration for the badge, the gremlin was holding a tankard.

No doubt, raising a glass in the Gremel Inn would be a fitting tribute to the men who wore the badge. **BW**

Churchill tanks carry infantry during the advance on the Gothic Line in 1944 AP/ALAMY



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SAVIOURS

of the LOST ART

One of Britain's newest military units has the complex task of protecting the world's most important heritage sites in times of conflict. But Indiana Jones need not apply! **Words: John Ash**

It is one of the most iconic scenes in cinema history: Indiana Jones, having plucked the Chachapoyan fertility idol from its podium in a Peruvian temple, sets off a chain of lethal boobytraps that culminate in him being pursued down a narrow corridor by a giant boulder. And that's before he faces innumerable perils on a quest to safeguard the biblical Ark of the Covenant from falling into the hands of the Nazis.

As a ripping yarn, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is hard to beat, even if real archaeologists would baulk at Dr Jones' methods and question the historical accuracy of the events depicted. However, in the fifth instalment of the series, *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*, now out in cinemas, there is a parallel between the cinematic legend and the work of one of Britain's newest military units. Swap the fedora, bullwhip and Smith and Wesson M1917 for a Virtus helmet and an L85A3 rifle and you get a little closer to reality. Formed in 2018, the tri-service Cultural Property Protection Unit has advised British armed forces on how to minimise damage to culturally significant sites and

artefacts within an active operational environment.

"We'd sooner arrest Indiana Jones than work with him," joked Commander Roger Curtis, RNR, as he sat down to speak with *Britain at War*. "In all seriousness, no matter what Dr Jones' intentions are, or who sent him, it is problematic. Who knows what money is changing hands – even if it seems legitimate on the face of it."

"The CPPU owes more to the recent film *The Monuments Men* and there is a longstanding historic precedent that massively predates our new legal obligations."

Medieval origins

It is important, difficult and sensitive work. The CPPU's role is to support a legally mandated

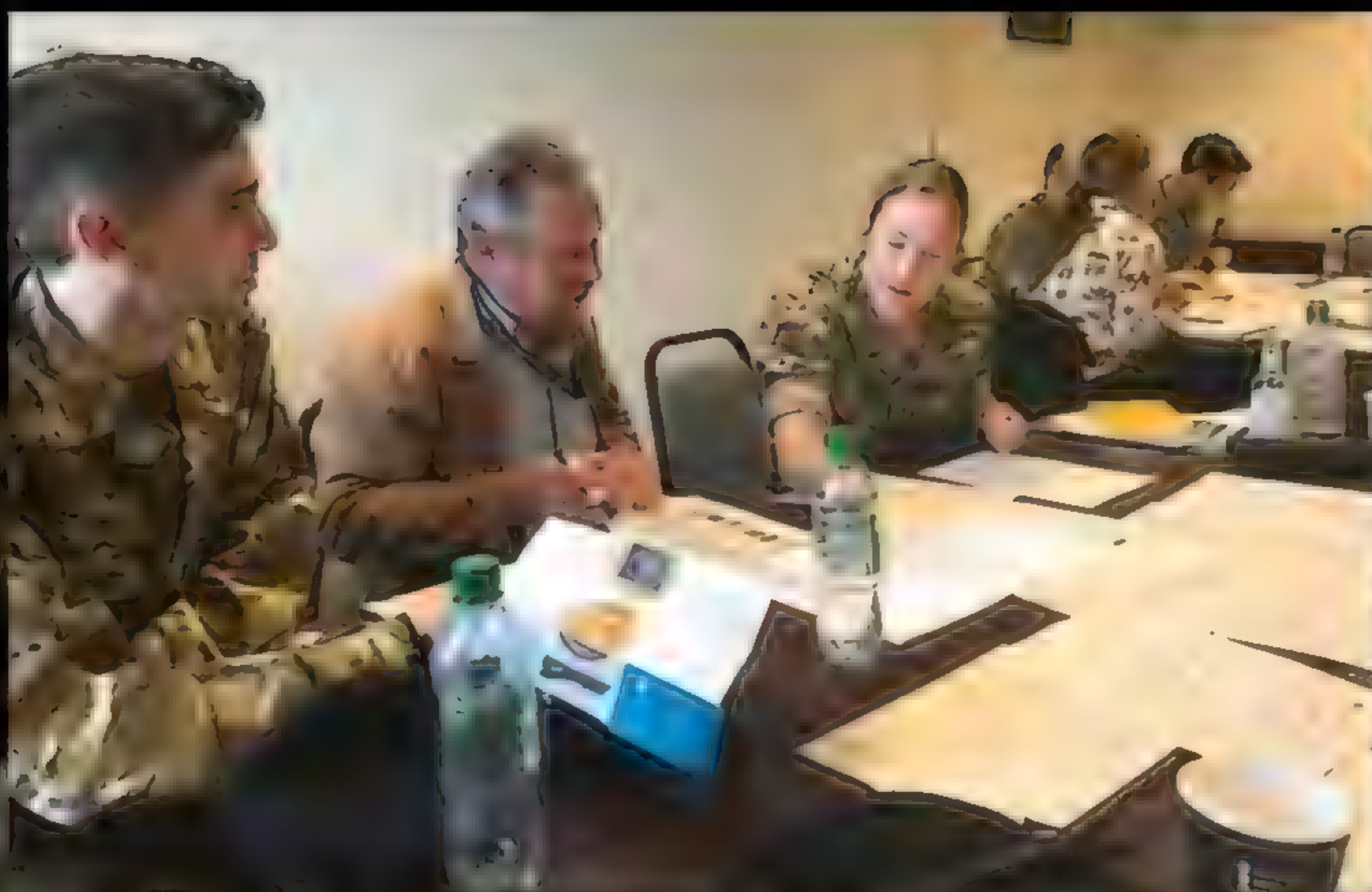
"We'd sooner arrest Indiana Jones than work with him"

COMMANDER ROGER CURTIS RNR

MAIN IMAGE: RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE/TOPFOTO



CPPU members prepare a briefing for field commanders on preventing inadvertent damage to heritage sites CPPU/MOD



effort to ensure the British military minimises damage to cultural heritage of all kinds during its deployments, as well as safeguarding priceless artefacts from looting or destruction by insurgents.

Its function is more involved with briefing commanders and research than picking through jungle temples, but it is not beyond the realms of possibility that this band of reservists could deploy in support of UK forces anywhere in the world. Not only does CPPU advice satisfy legal obligations, but it might secure a significant site and, by preventing unintentional damage, preserve goodwill toward a British presence in a complicated deployment.

It also has a direct consequence on the activities of an adversary, severing a means for insurgents to finance themselves. When the so-called Islamic State twice captured ancient Palmyra in 2015 and 2016, the destruction it inflicted was not simply wanton violence nor erasure of a culture that offended them. It was, in part, a means to gut the ruins of anything of value, contributing to the expansion, consolidation and resilience of the terrorist group.

While seemingly a modern concern, safeguarding cultural property has featured in campaigning since the very first recorded conflicts. In Britain, a significant example dates to the Second War of Scottish Independence, which erupted in August 1332. Beyond its major battles, this comprised tit-for-tat raids and reprisals by both sides. However, Edward III specifically ordered the destruction of cultural items and buildings – including a



Edward III crosses the Somme at the Battle of Blanchetaque. The King's 1346 chevauchée caused widespread destruction and led to the capture of Calais BENJAMIN WEST (ARTIST)/ROYAL COLLECTION



roman temple – to erase claims to an independent Scottish identity.

The 25-year Scottish campaign also sparked the Hundred Years' War, with chevauchées being the primary manner of attack. These large, mounted raids enabled an aggressor to complete martial objectives without raising all its forces, pillaging economic and cultural sites to provoke an armed response or undermining local authority. While churches were generally respected and refugees protected, the chevauchée had an amplified effect in a world still reeling from the Black Death, striking at fragile infrastructure, food production and sites of cultural significance.

Winning favour

By World War One, there was recognition that preventing the commonplace destruction of cultural property could win favour. Germany's 1914 crackdown on perceived francs-tireurs during the Rape of Belgium led to at least 23,000 deaths, widescale intentional destruction and the expulsion or flight of 20% of the Belgian population. The city of Leuven was sacked and its university library deliberately burned, with 232,000 books, manuscripts and incunabula destroyed. These atrocities had the effect of galvanising Allied will and helped to reverse anti-British sentiment in some countries, such as the neutral Netherlands.

Compare that to the approach taken by Anglo-Dominion forces as they stood before Jerusalem. Belgium perhaps weighed heavily on General Edmund Allenby as he planned the occupation of the most significant

The 65ft tall Arch of Triumph. A Roman ornamental archway at the ancient city of Palmyra in modern-day Syria. Commissioned in the 3rd century by Septimius Severus but was destroyed in 2015. VYACHESLAV ARGENBERG

General Edmund Allenby
KGPA/ALAMY

OPPOSITE: General Allenby's capture of Jerusalem in 1917 made cultural protection a newsworthy item, as this column from the December 11, 1917 edition of *The Times* shows. THE TIMES

The mayor of Jerusalem, Hussein Al-Husseini (with stick), attempts to deliver surrender document to Sergeants James Sedgewick and Frederick Hurcomb of 2/19th London Regiment. The sergeants refused to take the letter, as did several other troops, until Brigadier-General Watson arrived to accept it. US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



city in the Holy Land in December 1917, ordering that "every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest or customary place of prayer of whatsoever form of the three religions will be maintained and protected."

The general, steered by his London bosses, displayed a shrewd understanding of cultural sensitivities in a city significant to so many faiths and peoples. He saw that Muslim troops protected Islamic sites, employing clever, tailored deployments demanding no extra strength and requiring only a little thought about how best to employ those under his command. The knock-on effect was that lingering thoughts of resistance among Muslim

JERUSALEM CAPTURED. FORMAL ENTRY TO-DAY.

SAFETY OF THE HOLY PLACES.

MESSAGE FROM THE KING.

The capture of Jerusalem was announced in the House of Commons yesterday by Mr. Bonar Law in the following terms:—

General Allenby reports that on the 8th he attacked the enemy's positions south and west of Jerusalem. Welsh and Home County troops advancing from the direction of Bethlehem drove back the enemy, and passing Jerusalem on the east established themselves on the Jerusalem-Jericho road.

At the same time London infantry and dismounted Yeomanry attacked strong enemy positions west and north-west of Jerusalem and established themselves astride the Jerusalem-Shechem road.

The Holy City, being thus isolated, was surrendered to Sir Edmund Allenby by the Mayor on December 9.

The British Political Officer, together with the British Governor of the City, accompanied by British, French, Italian, and Indian Mahomedan guards, is on his way to safeguard the city and the Holy Places; General Allenby proposes to enter the city officially on December 11, accompanied by the commanders of the French and Italian Contingents and the head of the French Political Mission.

The capture of Jerusalem has been in some degree delayed in consequence of the great care which has been taken to avoid damage to sacred places in and around the city.

THE KING'S MESSAGE.

The following telegram was sent last evening by the King to General Sir E. H. H. Allenby:—

The news of the occupation of Jerusalem will be received throughout my Empire with the greatest satisfaction, and I heartily congratulate you and all ranks on this success. Such an achievement is a fitting sequel to the hard marching and fighting of the troops, as well as to the organization by which the difficulties of supply, transport, and water have been overcome.

I rejoice to think that by skilful dispositions you have preserved intact the Holy Places.—George, R.I.

inhabitants were disarmed by kindness.

It was common for archaeologists to deploy alongside British troops in the Middle East and to join the intelligence services. In 1916, at odds with German actions elsewhere, Ottoman general Djemal Pasha assigned archaeologist Theodor Wiegand to establish a cultural protection unit, the Deutsch-Türkisches Denkmalschutzkommando.

World War Two brought destruction on a massive scale, much of it a side-effect of strategic bombing. Many cultural assets were destroyed in the Luftwaffe's Baedeker Blitz, so named because the targets were selected via the Baedeker guides, specifically sites of British cultural heritage. The raids were a response to the RAF's bombing of Lübeck and its Hanseatic heritage, where the aim was martial, to hit war industry, but much damage was wrought on the city's cultural heart.

Overt support made things easier for those battling to preserve cultural heritage. This was certainly the case for the famous Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Unit – better known as the Monuments Men – created to provide cultural protection on a large scale with General Dwight D Eisenhower's vital backing.

Desert destruction

The reason for such support was simple: it had real military value and it went to the top. Leonard Woolley, a future Monuments Man, became the War Office's archaeological advisor. Although martial considerations remained the priority – after all, winning the war was the best way to stop damage to cultural property – it asserted its operational importance. In 1943, Lieutenant-Colonel Mortimer Wheeler wrote to the War Office urging deliberate action regarding a matter in the Western Desert that he considered to be of the utmost import. The veteran officer, keeper of the London Museum and director of the Institute of Archaeology, had identified threatened sites.

With Libya secure, he had visited Tripoli and Leptis Magna to find Roman ruins damaged by British troops. In his reforms, which were repeated in Sicily, he lectured troops on the importance of preserving cultural property, placed sensitive sites out-of-bounds and prevented structures such as radar stations or radio masts being built on ancient



Monuments Man and one of the first 'modern' archaeologists, Sir Leonard Woolley
HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION

BELOW: T E Lawrence and Leonard Woolley with a Hittite slab on the excavation site at Carchemish near Aleppo in 1913
OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH



grounds. The concern was also misuse and ignorance: blame for the theft of the Psusennes Treasures, stolen in 1941 from the Cairo Museum, was levied on the fact that too few guards had been assigned to protect them.

Also in 1943, Alan Rowe, the Egyptian Antiquities Service's Inspector of the Prohibited Military Area, Western Desert and conservator of the Graeco-Roman Museum, lobbied for action. He

The Monuments Men retrieving stolen art from Neuschwanstein Castle
BIANCA MAGGIO



identified "unsatisfactory attitude of the military authorities in damage caused to antiquities and sites by British troops", it having come to light that the Somaliland Camel Corps had been using the interior of the Abusir temple as a toilet.

Rowe was sent to ascertain damage to monuments and antiquities, as Italian propaganda capitalised on allegations of misconduct and attempted to foster local unrest when the British retreated from Libya in 1941. Other than some carved names, he found little "wilful" damage in Cyrenaica and noted that some officers had taken steps to safeguard items. In a Foreign Office report, Rowe also suggested others were to blame for much of the damage, commenting: "The Italians are not entitled to make a great fuss about the inscriptions, more especially as they themselves left coloured vignettes on the walls."

In spite of the efforts of Woolley, Wheeler, Rowe and others like them, the destruction was unparalleled. This led to the 1954 Hague Convention, establishing provisions to protect heritage in conflict zones. Parties were required to respect their cultural properties and those of other signatory states, and to shield such locations from exploitation or exposure to hostile action, whether targeted or inadvertent (ie, during fighting on adjacent ground or as a result of short-falling shells).

New obligations

Nevertheless, cultural property still came under fire. The frequency of damage to sites during the Balkan conflicts highlighted shortcomings in the Hague rulings and a second protocol was adopted in 1999. Even

so, a worrying number of breaches were recorded.

In a bid to avoid the repeat of something akin to the 2003 looting of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad or the gutting of Palmyra, the UN Security Council Resolution 2347 of 2017 bound signatories to implement the previous protocols and any new amendments. Today, the CPPU is required to integrate such provisions into British operations as per the conditions of the Hague Convention, ratified by the government in 2017.

This raises the question: what is cultural property? The definition is broad, which can present challenges. Anything of traditional, national, ethnic or religious interest, where its loss could result in social consequences, may qualify. Cultural property neither has to be grand nor famous, making its identification and safeguarding on live deployments all the more difficult.

A castle on the scale of Dover in Kent could be considered 'CP', as could a tiny fragment claimed to be from the True Cross – which was, usefully for our purposes, broken up during the Fourth Crusade and the Fall of Constantinople. A sacred site, burial ground or mass grave, even if planted over, could qualify, as could the Coronation spoon used to anoint Charles III – the destruction of the Crown Jewels during the Cromwellian Commonwealth being perhaps the most blatant attack on cultural property in British history.

UNESCO's definition includes moveable and immovable entities, irrespective of ownership. It encompasses monuments of architecture, art or history, sites of historical/artistic interest, works of art, manuscripts and books,



A store of cultural property recovered by the US Third Army and the Monuments Men in Schlosskirche Ellingen
US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

BELOW: British officer, veteran of two World Wars and archaeologist Sir Mortimer Wheeler
TOPFOTO

BOTTOM: Mortimer Wheeler sought to preserve archaeological remains, such as Leptis Magna, from being damaged by occupying troops
JOE PYREK



scientific and archive collections, faithful reproductions, custodians of heritage items and legacy material, such as places sacred to indigenous people. British CP, as defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, follows similar lines and includes Grade I/Cat A listed structures, collections sponsored by the Westminster/devolved governments, the National Record Offices, the British Film Institute and property in "state guardianship."

Militarising history

The CPPU enables the Ministry of Defence to fulfil its legal obligations and British commanders are "kept legal", explains Commander Curtis: "We provide bespoke preparatory knowledge that may assist local operations at a tactical level, and can also bring in relevant third-party agencies, such as Blue Shield – a Red Cross-esque organisation – for culturally significant sites and heritage".

The challenge has been to focus this broad brief, as Curtis explained: "We desire to

improve mission success and head off potential problems in the future by effective protection of CP."

This involves common-sense precautions such as fire prevention, but also the provision of protection – including directing boots on the ground and designating parties responsible for safeguarding CP: "There is a balance that we need to identify, case-by-case, in terms of local custody versus the needs of an occupying power. We must bring the locals on board, but, at the same time, a major challenge is to ascertain what to protect, how we decide that and even who we are protecting CP for."

Another objective, which harks back to World War Two, is preventing the exploitation of cultural heritage – the subversion of history and cultural property being used for propaganda. Government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs) in authoritarian states have the purpose of furthering politico-cultural interests at home and overseas, so that when military action takes place there is a prepared narrative to foster support. It is fake news, backed with tanks and guns.

Propagandising cultural heritage is a core component of Russia's playbook, known as 'maskirovka', and is being enacted in Ukraine, the Baltic states and Poland. The goal is to militarise revisionist perspectives of the USSR and brand the 'opposition' as neo-Nazis, reviving old grievances, providing justification to question national sovereignty and, potentially, creating a casus belli – the protection of ethnic Russians – all while encompassing a historical narrative. It ranges from the exploitation of Soviet war memorials in the Baltic to the replacement of Ukrainian heritage sites with new monuments, switching the Ukrainian language with Russian and imposing a Russian curriculum in schools. Priceless cultural assets in the Kherson Fine Arts and Mariupol's Arkhip Kuindzhi museums have been removed and Ukraine's government alleges that Russia has committed at least 1,271 crimes against Ukrainian cultural heritage, with some 473 cultural heritage sites destroyed.

The Kremlin also marshals the emotive power of cultural objects, presenting a replica Acheiropoietia blessed by the Patriarch of Moscow to commanders, which now tours Russian units to boost morale, an effort matched at home with the return of one of the holiest Russian religious icons to public display.





Perhaps Indiana Jones' quest to prevent Nazi exploitation of the Ark of the Covenant isn't as farfetched as it first sounds?

Preventing terror

Much like the fictional rescuer of renowned artefacts, the CPPU works with third-party organisations or individuals and partner nations, including the Netherlands, France and the United States, as part of a NATO framework.

The stakes can be high. In 2006, Al-Qaeda affiliated preparators targeted the al-Askari mosque in Samarra, Iraq, a holy site respected by Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims, then struck again in 2007. The attacks were considered by some as "the first domino" that led to the creation of ISIS. Had appropriate cultural protection been organised, not only might the bombings have been prevented, but

perhaps also the rise of the so-called Islamic State and all the barbarity of that caliphate.

Spared too would be Palmyra, an event where British forces and the CPPU specifically could not intervene, no matter how tempted the antiquarians, historians and those with other relevant interests and skills forming the unit might have been to do so. Commander Curtis explained: "Our remit is to support UK defence in meeting its obligations in crisis tension and war. We cannot involve ourselves in the matters of other states."

The unit would rarely, if ever, sanction the removal of CP without explicit host nation agreement, but would advise against accidental damage or help organise security during military operations.

Nevertheless, the CPPU has supported UK activity in West



Africa, the Balkans and the Baltic, completing a range of work from providing legal training to troops pre-deployment to the direct protection of key sites alongside British military police and/or state forces.

The gains could far exceed the simplicity of the process. Offering advice on where a long-range British patrol might make camp to avoid spoiling a sensitive site – or its destruction, should an aggressor attempt to engage – could be given in a brief conversation, avoiding a kneejerk response from locals cautious of a British/NATO presence. **BW**

BAW thanks Commander Roger Curtis for his assistance with this article.

ABOVE: Archaeological work on the 94,000-acre Salisbury Plain Training Area recently uncovered a 1,400-year-old Anglo-Saxon burial ground CPPU/MOD

ABOVE LEFT: A hall of Mariupol's museum after it was shelled and burned by Russian-backed separatists, April 2022 AP/ALAMY

BELOW: Modern-day Monuments Men (and Women!) – members of the CPPU at Edinburgh Castle CPPU/MOD



Those watching the recent coronation may have noticed the Princess Royal forming part of the procession as the 'Gold Stick-in-Waiting'. But what is this curious military appointment? Christopher Joll goes back in time to find out

THE NEAREST GUARD

The Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms may claim to be the 'nearest guard' to the sovereign, but there have been others over the centuries, today oft-forgotten subjects, who have provided nothing but the closest, most personal and loyal protection possible to the sovereign.

Well... mostly...

Indeed, the role and descriptor of the 'nearest guard' actually belongs to the Gold Sticks, a court appointment established – like the Gentlemen at Arms – by King Henry VIII.

While the role of the Gentlemen at Arms was – and remains – to act as the monarch's ceremonial bodyguard, the role of the two Gold Sticks (on rotation) in England was to provide the sovereign with around-the-clock, close protection. To emphasise the point, the Gold Stick-in-Waiting (the one on duty at the given time) was until the reign of Queen Victoria required to sleep outside the king's (or queen regnant's) bedroom door.

Victoria, who thought it unseemly, ended this long-standing duty. Ever since the royal duty has been largely ceremonial – although sources reveal that an "incredibly honoured" Princess Anne was invited by King Charles III as reward for "loyalty, unwavering devotion to duty" and her value as a "trusted lieutenant".

Of course, the Princess Royal



Charles II recreated the position of Gold Stick following the restoration of the monarchy. PETER RAY (ARTIST)/ROYAL COLLECTION

was entitled to her place on parade thanks to her colonelcy of The Blues and Royals – but there are two Gold Sticks to choose from, as we will get to shortly. Ceremonial it may be, but the position occupied by the Gold Stick did, as will be seen, have consequences in the reign of King Charles II.

The great ousting

The title of the appointment refers to the holders' staff of office: a gold-topped walking stick or cane. Originally, the Gold Sticks were selected from the two ostensibly loyal – or at least favoured – individuals from the sovereign's bodyguard.

As with most of the panoply of the English crown, the employ of

BELOW: Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, rode just behind the Gold State Coach as Charles III's Gold Stick-in-Waiting at his recent coronation. KRISTIAN DAWSON/MOD

Gold Stick fell into abeyance during the Commonwealth period where Cromwell ruled as Lord Protector. It was revived with the restoration of Charles II, albeit with one major change: the appointment in England was eventually made ex-officio for the two senior colonels of the Sovereign's Household Cavalry.



The appointment did not carry with it a salary. However, one of the first post-restoration Gold Sticks, Lord Gerard of Brandon – Colonel of The King's Troop of Horse Guards (later the 1st Life Guards) – had to be very well compensated for his loss of office when Charles II decided to appoint

his eldest illegitimate son in 1668. The distinguished and wealthy, if roguish, military leader was ousted in favour of the popular James Scott (born Crofts – he took the surname of his heiress bride, Anne), the Duke of Monmouth.

Scott was conferred the Troop's colonelcy and, with it, one of the

The Gentlemen at Arms, who wear the uniform of an 1840s Heavy Dragoon Guards officer, still form part of the ceremonial royal bodyguard, but the Gold Sticks once provided the closest protection to the monarch LEON NEAL/GETTY

Gold Sticks. The price paid to Lord Gerard was a staggering £30,000, which equates today to about £5.8m. By comparison, Belvoir Castle near Grantham, the stately home and faux castle rebuilt after the original was razed during the Civil Wars – and for our purposes handily completed in 1668 – cost under £12,000.



THE GOLD AND SILVER STICKS

As the Gold Sticks were, until recently, aristocrats with other responsibilities, their royal duties were time consuming. In 1678, Charles II agreed to the appointment of a deputy, a post that was designated as the Silver Stick, and with it came a silver-topped cane. From its inception, in England the job was held by the Lieutenant Colonel Commanding the Household Cavalry and he in turn appointed his own deputy who is still known today as the Silver Stick Adjutant. For readers north of Hadrian's Wall, the offices of Gold Stick and Silver Stick in Scotland are held by the two senior officers of the Royal Company of Archers.

In 1820, King George IV elevated his father's favourite regiment, the Royal Horse Guards, to the status of Household Cavalry and, thereafter, one of the two Gold Sticks was held by the colonel of that regiment. This practice continued with their successor units and the current Gold Sticks are Lieutenant General Sir Edward Smyth-Osbourne, colonel of The Life Guards, and the Princess Royal, colonel of The Blues and Royals (Royal Horse Guards and 1st Dragoons).

In the line of duty

Since Victoria's reign, and in addition to the ending of the royal bedroom duty, the Gold Stick-in-Waiting's primary responsibility has not been royal protection. Instead, they are to convey the sovereign's commands to the Household Cavalry regiments.

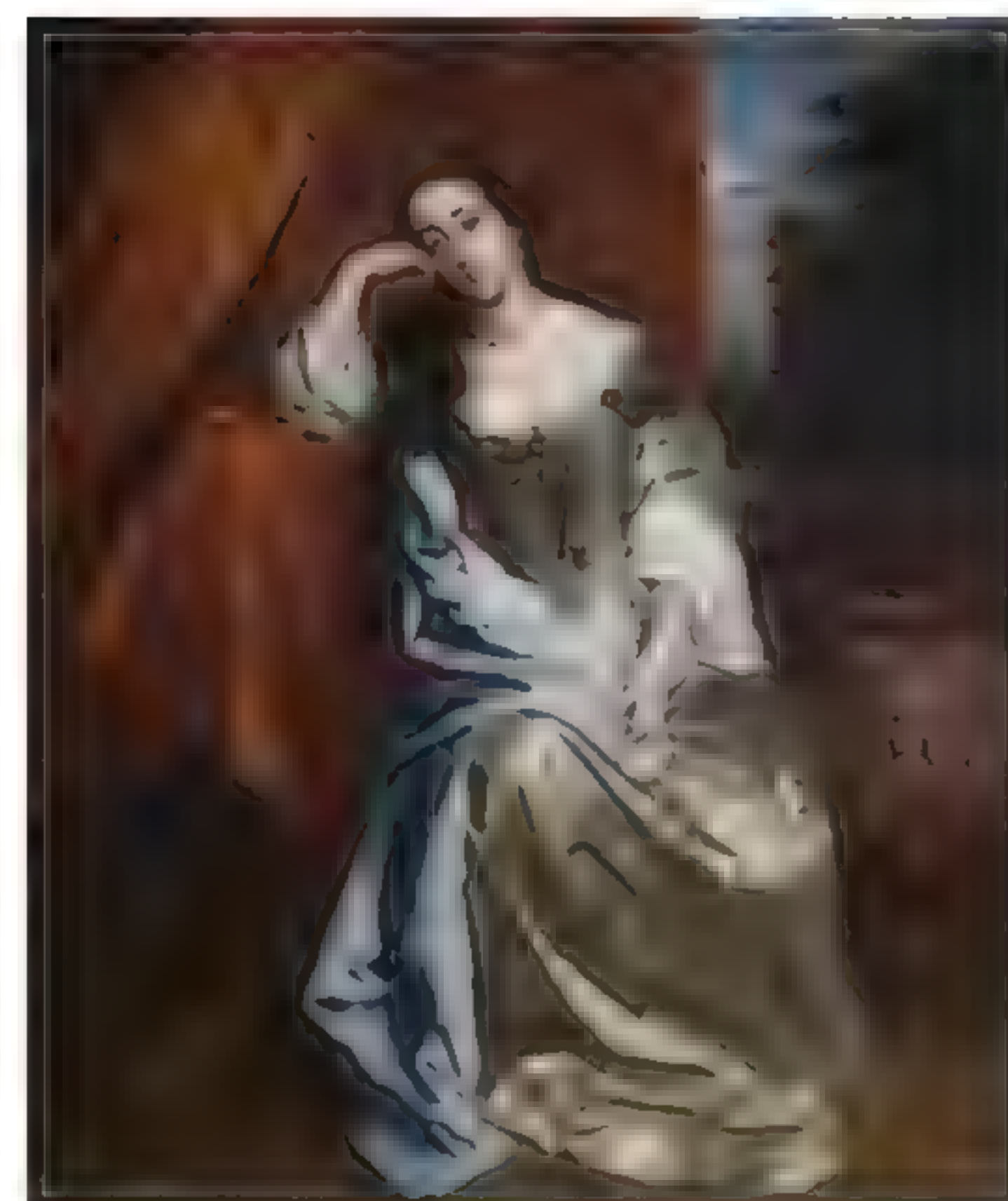
Still known as Gold Stick Orders, these are the written instructions for the deployment of the corps on state and ceremonial occasions. However, in practice, the task of drafting the order lies within the Royal Household and the responsibility for implementing it has devolved to the Silver Stick Adjutant and his staff at Horse Guards. However, aside from these now ceremonial and administrative tasks, the job of a Gold Stick has not always been risk-free.

Royal palaces have always suffered from the threat or the actuality of fire: the Palace of Whitehall burnt to the ground in 1698, the Palace of Westminster (although not a royal residence) was destroyed by a blaze in 1834, Hampton Court Palace had a serious fire in 1986, and Windsor Castle was badly damaged in the 1992 'annus horribilis'.

One such instance ought to have



LEFT: Lord Gerard of Brandon served as a Gold Stick to Charles II until ousted by James Scott PETER LELY (ARTIST)/NATIONAL GALLERIES SCOTLAND



Barbara Villiers, shown as the Duchess of Cleveland, was saved from death (and no doubt scandal) by a Gold Stick PETER LELY (ARTIST)/SCHORR COLLECTION



James Scott, Duke of Monmouth and Gold Stick, in command of British forces during the Third Anglo-Dutch War in 1672 JAN WYCK (ARTIST)/ACTIVE ART/ALAMY

led to scandal and, should it have arisen today, certainly would have hit the front pages. One night in the early 1660s, the Gold Stick-in-Waiting, Lord Gerard, was on duty outside Charles II's bedroom when the fire alarm was raised. Having summoned the guard to rescue the King, Lord Gerard banged on the royal bedroom door to warn its occupant to get up and dressed.

But Brandon knew the King was not alone. However, he must have been at least slightly surprised when Charles II appeared with a naked woman in his arms. This was his mistress-of-the-moment, Barbara Villiers (the future Duchess of Cleveland), whom he pushed into Brandon's arms with the instructions to put her in a place of safety.

Wrapping her in his own cloak, Brandon put the lady into a large closet where, it was later alleged, he "profited from the opportunity".

The royal rebel

Worse scandal befell Brandon's successor. As mentioned, he was ousted from his colonelcy at great cost to the King's Purse to appoint James Scott, the Duke of Monmouth. Although only 18 or 19 at the time, Monmouth was already an experienced veteran of the Anglo-Dutch War – although as a sailor, serving at sea under the Duke of York – before he served as a cavalry captain.

In 1672, he led a force of 6,000 men during the Third Anglo-Dutch War and developed quite the martial reputation. He effectively became the de facto commander-in-chief of the army with oversight of all major orders. Monmouth led troops again in 1678, and further distinguished himself in a series of cavalry charges as he led the English and Scottish contingent within the French Army of Flanders at the



The capture and subsequent (botched) beheading of the Duke of Monmouth gives him the dubious honour of being the only Gold Stick to have been executed HERITAGE IMAGES/TOPFOTO

Battle of Saint-Denis. The next year he put down the Covenanter rebellion at Bothwell Bridge, further elevating his fame.

And that was the problem. Although illegitimate and unable to inherit the throne, he was seen as a pretender. Accordingly, the Duke of Monmouth remains the only holder of the “gilded twig” (as it is irreverently known in the Household Cavalry regiments) to have been executed.

This followed hard on his unsuccessful leadership of a rebellion against his uncle, King James II/VII. Obligated to enter exile, Monmouth had been implicated in a plot to murder Charles II and the

King’s brother, James, and when Charles died, Monmouth returned with an army to assert his claim. He was roundly defeated by James’s loyalists at Sedgemoor in July 1685 and captured.

His execution was a foregone conclusion and no clemency was given. The sentence was carried out in public at Tower Hill, London, on July 15, 1685 by the deliberately chosen – and notoriously inept – Jack Ketch. Despite being generously tipped by his victim, Ketch took eight blows of the axe to remove the royal rebel’s head.

Perhaps as a consequence, royal holders of the appointment have since been uncommon. Since

the 1920s, there have been only two: Lord Mountbatten, who was regimental colonel of The Life Guards from 1965 to 1979, and the Princess Royal, whose continuing colonelcy of The Blues and Royals began in 1998.

The fallers

Scott was not the last Gold Stick to suffer misfortune. Just over two centuries later, an ignominious and possibly life-threatening fate befell the elderly colonel of the 2nd Life Guards, the 3rd Earl Howe, who was Gold Stick-in-Waiting on Queen Victoria’s 1897 Diamond Jubilee procession. In his heavy full dress uniform, he succumbed to the heat of the day, fainted and toppled from his horse just outside Buckingham Palace.

“They say history repeats, or at least rhymes, and 122 years after Lord Howe’s ‘unauthorised dismount’ the same fate befell Lord Guthrie”

Earl Mountbatten of Burma holding the Gold Stick in the quadrangle of Buckingham, 1972 ALLAN WARREN

Queen Victoria was not amused and the Earl’s name was struck from the honours list.

They say history repeats, or at least rhymes, and 122 years after Lord Howe’s ‘unauthorised dismount’, the same fate befell the then Gold Stick-in-Waiting, Field Marshal Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank, Colonel of The Life Guards. In 2018, Guthrie fell from his horse – for the same reason as his predecessor and in almost exactly the same spot – at the end of the Queen’s Birthday Parade.

The consequences were far kinder on this occasion, with well wishes sent by various defence staff.

Finally, and although only indirectly related to his appointment as Gold Stick and Colonel of The Life Guards, the murder of Earl Mountbatten of Burma remains the highest profile death-in-office to have been suffered by the holder of this ancient royal appointment, following his assassination by the Provisional IRA in August 1979.

Present and future appointees, who ride unprotected and in plain sight on state occasions, must hope that it remains so. **BW**

Christopher Joll is a former officer in The Life Guards, turned author and military historian. He is currently the regimental historian of the Household Cavalry.



The man who brought news of war

He rose from the peripheries to become one of the most important figures of World War Two and beyond... the unsung general and confidant who shaped modern Europe is detailed by **Dr Andrew Sangster**

General Hastings Lionel Ismay played a critical role not only in World War Two, but also in the peace that followed. Yet, he is hardly mentioned in history books.

I surveyed a dozen popular histories and tallied up the references to 'Pug', as he was known – a moniker inspired by his jawline. Together they encompassed almost 10,000 pages of historical thought, but Ismay was only mentioned 20 times – and nine of those only noted his presence. In short, his name featured on a mere 11 pages.

Moreover, Pug's memoirs are somewhat scant and the one biography written about him is more than 50 years old. I discovered more about the man from the King's College London archives – and even from files archived in the United States – than in any published material.

Hastings Ismay, later Baron Ismay, was born on June 21, 1887. He grew

up in Nainital, British India, where his father Stanley had decided to stay in retirement. Young Pug was sent to England for his education when he was eight and stayed with his aunt in Stratford-on-Avon, becoming part of her family.

Ismay began his education at a private preparatory school, then went to Charterhouse Public School in 1900. Such schools were at this time breeding grounds for military officers, politicians, the legal profession and the Church, so perhaps his choice of career is unsurprising. According to Pug, his father was upset that he could not enter Cambridge University, but he passed in 1904 into the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, with high marks.

After Sandhurst, he followed the route of many young officers and returned to India to serve on the North West Frontier, where he played golf, polo, attended dances at Government House and





Pug Ismay behind Churchill in the Downing Street garden, May 7, 1945. Seated, left to right: Portal, Brooke, Churchill, Cunningham. Standing: Hollis and Ismay. OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH.

experienced the life enjoyed by many young subalterns.

Meeting Winston

In 1914, unaware that in a few months the war would erupt in Europe, he secured a posting in Somaliland with the Camel Corps. They were fighting against the Mad Mullah and the ferocious Dervishes, powerful opponents not wanting the British or any Europeans occupying their homeland. He saw action, albeit not like the modern warfare developing in Europe. In 1919, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and a year later awarded the DSO.

On his return to England, he met his future wife 'Darry' (Laura, neé Clegg), though the marriage was delayed until 1921 as he was ordered back to India. It was a happy union, Ismay fortunate to find a shrewd and supportive companion prepared to live with a man who spent months away at a time. Together they had three daughters.

Ismay returned to India in the autumn and, while continuing his pursuit of sport, found himself attending the Staff College at Quetta. Such was his position that Pug and Darry mixed with the upper echelons of society, their lives tending to revolve around events at Government House – though Darry found the local climate difficult.

Pug applied for a vacancy at another Staff College course, in



General Ismay as Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Winston Churchill, December 1944. AUTHOR

Ismay served with the Camel Corps in Somaliland during World War One. TOPFOTO

Andover, and was soon Britain-bound. He became assistant secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) where he met the famous chief Sir Maurice Hankey, describing in his memoirs his feelings of being a "new boy at school". He also admitted his title had little meaning to his friends – even those in military circles.

In 1926, with the General Strike, various sub-committees sprang into life to work on the problems of keeping Britain running. Significantly for Ismay, one of these was chaired by then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill. Pug became its secretary, pushing him into his first meeting with the already prolific Winston. He noted Churchill's powerful personality and direct approach, reflecting: "It had been a thrilling experience to see him in action."

An end to soldiering

The young Ismay had longed for a military command. However, Hankey informed him that the India Office wanted to start their own CID, and the newly nominated Viceroy Lord Willingdon wanted him as his military secretary.

This transpired to be misleading as Pug became more of a ceremonial officer for the new Viceroy. Nevertheless, he liked Lord Willingdon as he did not appreciate the prevailing social exclusiveness between Europeans and Indians. He had been told it was a two-year appointment, and in 1932 Ismay was offered a plum posting to the Intelligence Directorate of the War Office. With it came promotion to full colonel, which he accepted.

In May 1933, he reported for duty at the War Office as GSO1 (General Staff Officer – Intelligence). He was



"He followed the route of many young officers and returned to India to serve on the North West Frontier and experienced the life enjoyed by many young subalterns"

then offered a command post in India, but he felt he had to turn it down: "As I signed the letter, I felt a pang at the thought that my days of real soldiering were over. It was like saying goodbye to the dreams of my youth," he wrote.

From then on, Ismay's military career would no longer be pursued in the saddle, but as a backroom officer with a key to a mechanism that would grow in importance.

There was distinct uncertainty as Nazism grew in Germany, Fascism bloomed in Italy and an ideological civil war gripped Spain. It was a confusing time for Pug, who admitted difficulties in preparing for the unknown. It was nevertheless all carefully considered by CID, which concluded the threat would likely be Germany and possibly backed by Italy or even Japan.

It also projected an outbreak of hostilities for the autumn of 1939 – which in hindsight has proven unbelievably astute.

Hankey retired in July 1938 and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain decided to separate the two appointments. Pug became CID secretary, and Sir Edward Bridges head of the Combined Office and secretary to cabinet. In August 1939, parliament was on its annual recess when Pug learned of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact – a non-aggression treaty between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union enabling

"Who would ever have believed these two gangsters could join"



ABOVE: Prime Minister Churchill with General Sir Bernard Paget (C-in-C Home Forces) and Ismay observing a training exercise ALAMY

American statesman Harry Hopkins (right) with the US ambassador to Britain John Winnant, and President Roosevelt's daughter Anna Boettiger converse aboard a US warship. A similar, humorous setting between Hopkins and Pug Ismay led to a useful working relationship NARA



Ismay in Combined Chiefs of Staff discussions at the Potsdam Conference. He sits between Marshal of the RAF, Charles Portal, and Royal Marine General Leslie Hollis, the senior assistant secretary in the War Cabinet Office and, like Pug, was present at virtually every key decision during that period and at all the major conferences NARA



them to partition Eastern Europe. Pug was astonished – even in his position, with what he knew, it was a surprise. "Who would ever have believed these two gangsters could join," he wrote.

News of war

With Germany having invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, it was Ismay who on September 3 who informed the Chiefs of Staff that no news regarding the Anglo-French ultimatum had been received, indicating Britain was at war with Germany. There was no comment.

Later, Chamberlain informed Pug that Churchill had been given full authority and he was to be assisted by a suitable staff officer who would also join the Chiefs of Staff. That was to be Ismay, and so closely involved would he become that he would very often be photographed standing immediately behind the great, if bombastic, war leader.

According to one of Winston's biographers, Ismay was "one of Churchill's invaluable props". He served in a hybrid role for the duration and there were so many different and fluid aspects to his work with Churchill that to any other candidate it would have been daunting. Pug toiled as a mediator between him and his service chiefs. Once he replaced Chamberlain as premier, Pug assisted the new prime minister's drive and kept him steady. He remained in post because he was robust, friendly and trustworthy – prized attributes in Winston's bright blue eyes that also led to his selection of General Sir Alan Brooke as Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

However, Churchill demanded another valuable quality: strength. He required strong personalities around him and decried 'yes

men.' The strong-willed leader wanted it his own way on every occasion, but it was vital that he met disagreement – an understanding very much part of his character. Pug's presentations of reports and evaluations were excellent as far as the prime minister was concerned, too, not least because it was known that Churchill had a sharp eye for grammatical errors and syntax and liked a sentence to flow. Moreover, he would explode if he came across an American-English spelling.

There had been considerable criticism of Churchill becoming minister of defence alongside his primary role as premier, but Pug stood alongside him as an intermediary. He also brought his own talents and was capable of the off-the-cuff coyness that was sometimes necessary: When the French had asked for more fighter support, Pug used his Hindustani to speak to his assistant in London by telephone. He knew his man also spoke the language and understood the need for total secrecy with the French in earshot.

Keeping Churchill in check

Pug was Churchill's constant companion and so was witness to the most poignant moments, often at Chequers and amid secret conversations. Naturally, there



were clashes as the service chiefs disagreed with their political master, but although this led to several heated moments with Churchill arguing his case again and again, he never went against their joint decision or advice. He understood that, ultimately, he was answerable to parliament, and Pug was there to smooth ruffled feathers. He understood his role in these internal

Prime Minister Churchill frequently visited military sites to view preparations and was usually joined by Ismay. Here, on a visit to see V1 countermeasures in southern England, Ismay converses with the premier AP/ALAMY

wranglings, and he felt he was a 'cog' in a rapidly changing world of high command.

From sitting on Churchill's bed for early morning discussions, to sudden meetings with zero notice, Ismay was a constant presence working around Churchill's habits of catnapping, late nights and other idiosyncrasies. Churchill demanded from Pug only the necessary and issued him instructions. In turn, Pug encouraged him to tone down harsh minutes or memos. He frequently accompanied Churchill at home and abroad, and it was he who first heard the famous words, "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few", as he orated in the car.

An attendee of all the major conferences of Allied leaders, Ismay moved among the leaders and their representatives, often providing amusing insights into their personalities. Roosevelt's special envoy, Harry Hopkins was not of the military cast, but Pug soon spotted his value. He related a time when he had invited Hopkins for a walk ashore, but Hopkins preferred to stay sitting. He later caught up with a surprised Pug and explained that he had found a comfortable seat on deck – until a polite naval officer told him that that it was unwise to sit on a depth charge!





LEFT: OCTAGON, also the Second Quebec Conference, of September 1944. Ismay stands second left. The conference decided the Allied occupation zones in a defeated Germany, the Morgenthau Plan to demilitarise Germany, Lend-Lease aid, and the role of the Royal Navy in the Pacific
NARA

RIGHT: Ismay's affable nature not only smoothed ruffled feathers, but ensured that even the noted Anglophobe Admiral King (pictured) was willing to work with him
USN MUSEUM



While perhaps an odd specimen, Hopkins became a herald of good fortune and part of Churchill's 'secret circle', so was kept in the picture by the hard-working Ismay. The result of forging such relations was extremely worthwhile, but it wasn't easy. In a 1946 lecture, Pug explained: "I can assure you that, whatever you may have read about banquets at the Kremlin and so forth, these conference meals were no picnic. Personally, I was out on my feet at the end of practically every one of them."

Oil on troubled waters

This personality eased friction on the home front, too. Pug noticed that Britain's commanders were under continuous pressure from Churchill, distressed by failures in North Africa and increasingly desperate for a victory. Pug insisted Churchill keep in touch with his commanders to encourage and support them. Others interpret that Churchill was pestering General Claude Auchinleck to move faster towards a victory, which reflected Brooke's frequent criticism of

Churchill's interference. Brooke was closer to the truth, but Ismay was always there to pour oil on troubled waters.

Pug explained that although Churchill respected the military mind, he was always willing to take calculated risks. It was Pug smoothing things over once more, showing the positives of Churchill's leadership, but even he could struggle sometimes, so it fell to someone like Brooke to block Winston's more reckless, impetuous ideas. Pug later admitted that Churchill had the habit of 'bombarding' commanders with requests, advice and demands – some of which Pug accepted were "irrelevant or superfluous".

Ismay also recalled the moment he knew the war was won. He had been in the Carlton Hotel Grillroom when he first heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor, later writing that had he "not been in such a public place he would have shouted for joy". With the Soviet Union already onside, he could rejoice because although Britain's closest friend had suffered a dreadful attack, all remaining sentiment for American isolationism evaporated.

Pearl brought a committed ally, a future decision maker in the conferences to come. The trick was to resolve the question of an agreed strategy. The Soviets wanted Germany attacked directly and the Americans agreed, not understanding why Britain was in North Africa and wary of Churchill's views on the Balkans. They were also suspicious of fighting to prop up the British Empire. It led to highly contentious



LEFT: Men of the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade come ashore in 1944 on Juno Beach, D-Day, June 6. Ismay described 1944 and its vital invasion as "the year of destiny"
OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

meetings in which Ismay played a vital role.

In short, the Americans liked him. One of Pug's greatest assets was his ability to form friendships with many who were not happy with the British approach. Unlike Brooke, Pug thought that General George Marshall was a great leader, and he made friends with many of the United States' most difficult figures – including noted Anglophobe Admiral Ernest King and General Mark Clark. His gentlemanly demeanour smoothed the way in the sometimes strained Anglo-American alliance.

The year of destiny

Ismay would also gamble. Amid a period of bitter infighting between Churchill and the chiefs of staff, he offered his resignation in a gambit to take the blast of Churchill's wrath. Winston refused to let him go. He therefore became the bridge between the fire-spitting prime minister and his more realistic service chiefs.

However, it was tiring – once, on a long flight, Ismay slept the entire 17 hours. It is a detail indicative of supreme dedication we would almost certainly not have known about had it not been for Churchill who, concerned that his confidant had not eaten, tried to stir him and wondered whether he had died!



ABOVE: Pug at Potsdam conversing with Soviet officers. Left to right: Lieutenant Colonel Kuznetsov; Lt General Karanadze; Gen Ismay; Col Gen Kruglov; and British staff officer Gen Sir Brian Robertson. Ismay had just presented Kruglov with the KBE TOPFOTO

“One of Pug's greatest assets was his ability to form friendships with many who were not happy with the British approach”

For Ismay and many others, 1944 was all about Operation Overlord. He described it as ‘the year of destiny’, which was correct in many senses, as it also brought his promotion to full general. He recorded one amusing anecdote

concerning the finer details of timing. Churchill had asked if anyone knew when William the Conqueror landed, and Pug, who had again fallen asleep, stirred and offered 1066 – not realising the premier had asked for the time of day. Pug was surprised by roars of laughter and spotted Churchill's pensive glance, when he pityingly said: “Pug, you should have been in your basket ages ago.”

The pair shared moments of impishness, too. Pug recorded the moment when he found Churchill closeted with Admiral Bertram Ramsay, concocting a plan for Churchill to travel across on D-Day. At first, he was horrified that the top man should be so close to danger, but then he mused that Churchill ought to be at the centre of it – just in case critical decisions suddenly reared. Ultimately, Pug was swayed into quiet because he too was promised a seat – the venture had to be blocked by King George VI.

However, there was still serious travelling to do. The Yalta Conference looked not only to concluding the conflict but also to shaping its aftermath. Even so, it strained Ismay, who surmised: “The conference lasted about a week. From the gastronomic point of view, it was enjoyable; from the social point of view, successful; from the military point of view, unnecessary;

BELOW: Ismay (far left) with Mountbatten, Wilson, Alexander, Portal, Brooke and Cunningham on the Mall, during the June 8, 1946 Victory Parade ASSOCIATED PRESS/ALAMY





Ismay reprises his wartime role for the camera in March 1948, at the underground British General HQ on Marsham Street, London AFP/GETTY

and from the political point of view, depressing.”

To NATO

Post-war, Ismay visited Berlin and was shocked by the destruction, and noted an audience with the King – the monarch made a point of congratulating him and Sir Edward Bridges: The trio were the only three who kept their jobs during the duration of the war, he said, as Churchill was now out of power.

Nevertheless, his future was uncertain. After the war, Pug was busied by voluntary work. He retired from the army in 1946 and received his peerage in 1947 from Prime Minister Clement Attlee in recognition of his war service.

He was desperate to swap work for his beloved Jersey cows on his home farm, but it was not to be. India beckoned once more, and he travelled as Lord Mountbatten’s aid. There, he assisted in the oversight of the controversial and bloody independence and partitioning of India and Pakistan. Both at the time and since, Mountbatten has



NATO foreign ministers look on as treaties are signed making West Germany a part of NATO. The alliance’s secretary general Lord Ismay stands right BETTMAN/GETTY



“Keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down”

HASTINGS ISMAY, 1ST BARON ISMAY, NATO SECRETARY GENERAL

been the subject of scrutiny for the way he oversaw the fiasco. Ismay felt the pain of the proceedings thereafter. He tried to account for why things happened as they did, and never publicly criticised Lord Mountbatten, but was more scathing in his private writing.

On his return to Britain, he took on other voluntary roles and spoke as a cross-bench peer in the House of Lords. Attlee asked him to be the honorary chairman for the Festival of Britain, and he remained close to Churchill, providing considerable assistance to his history writing. When Churchill returned to power, he returned Pug to the political arena as secretary of state for commonwealth relations. However, this was mere pretext, as Churchill truly valued his expertise in defence matters instead.

And with that came a senior position. In 1952 – and very much against Pug’s wishes – Churchill insisted he became the first secretary general of the NATO alliance. “It is your duty to accept, Pug,” he said. Ismay took office that April and, typically, he took to it and worked hard.

There was travelling and addresses, producing instructional booklets, organising an efficient

administration, dealing with problems relating to the European Defence Community, and supporting West Germany’s admission. The NATO flag was developed under his watch, and he generated much popular publicity for the fledgling alliance. He had to deal with the habitual American complaints about European budgets, the Cyprus issue and the Suez Crisis, eventually retiring after five years and 53 days in post when he was 70.

Nevertheless, the reluctant first chief civil servant responsible for co-ordinating the workings of the alliance – and, with Lord Carrington, one of only two Britons to hold that office – became a faithful advocate, coining the famous phrase describing its role, to “keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in and the Germans down.”

Churchill would later ask him: “Have you forgiven me for sending you to NATO?” The response: “Sir, you were right, as always.”

Ismay considered

Following his return to his cows, Pug remained busy with

Ismay as secretary general of NATO ahead of the newly adopted emblem and flag
ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY

correspondence, his and others’ memoirs and publications, and the defence of Churchill, Mountbatten and at one time Eisenhower.

He also supported the cause of Polish officers unable to return to their Soviet-occupied homeland. His expertise was called upon as late as 1963, when Prime Minister Harold Macmillan sought his help regarding defence policy. Ismay died on December 17, 1965 – the same year as Churchill. He was 78.

The most curious aspect of Pug’s life remains his ongoing relationship with Churchill, and after the war he was constantly assisting him not least in some of the more delicate matters arising in his history of the war. Ismay was always there to protect Churchill’s reputation, and he dealt with correspondence that raised issues over his account of the war. It was heartfelt loyalty.

Furthermore, Ismay was highly respected by fellow generals, the Americans, senior civil servants and politicians – all of whom, baring Lord Moran (Churchill’s doctor), describing him in a pleasant and kindly light.

Naturally, he had his drawbacks, and he refused to see Churchill in any other way. Yet, in a world of bitter conflict and threat, he stood out as being supremely placed to steer the course of European freedom and security – twice. NATO, of course, persists and the defensive alliance that rose under his mindful guidance is as important now as it has ever been.

There are few men who could claim such an impact on the shaping of modern Europe – but Pug Ismay is one of them. **BW**

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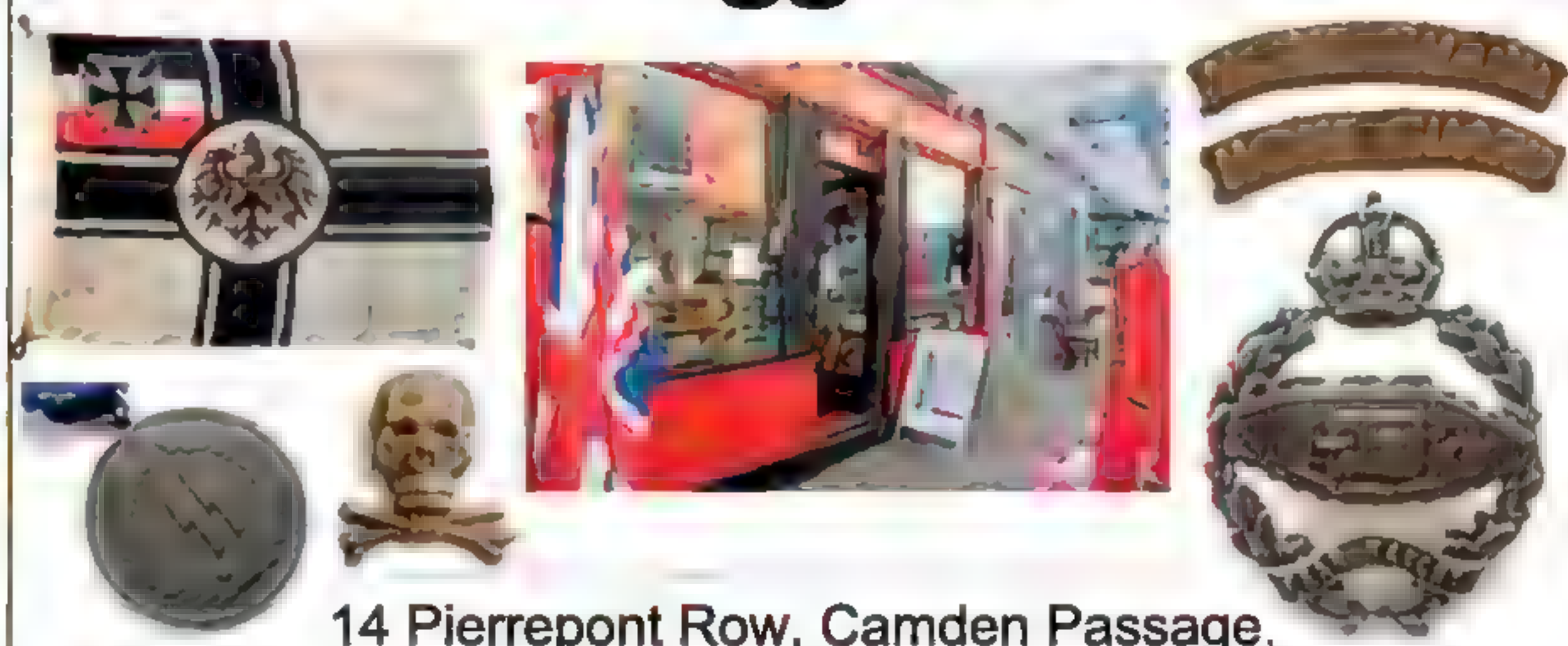


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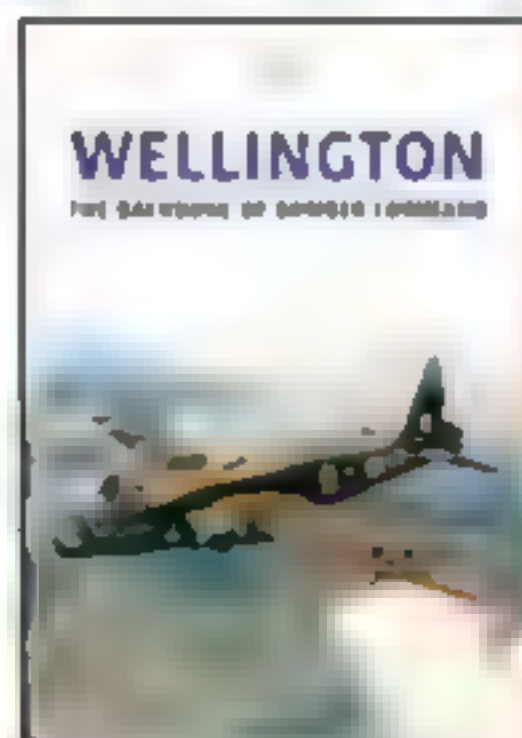
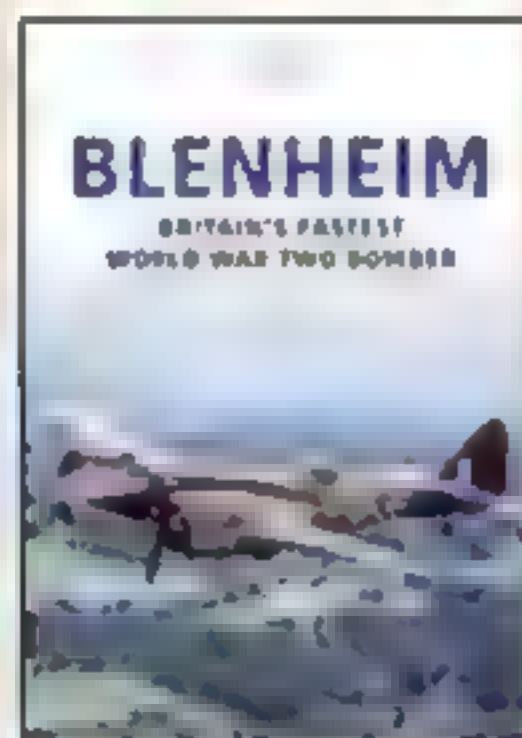
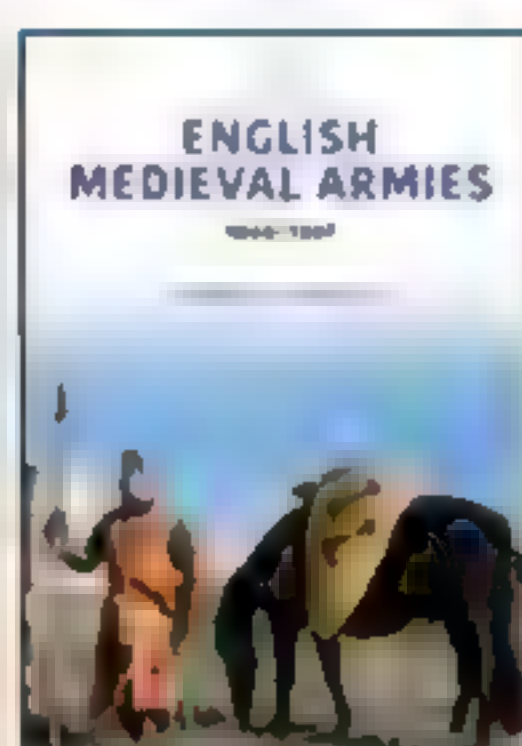
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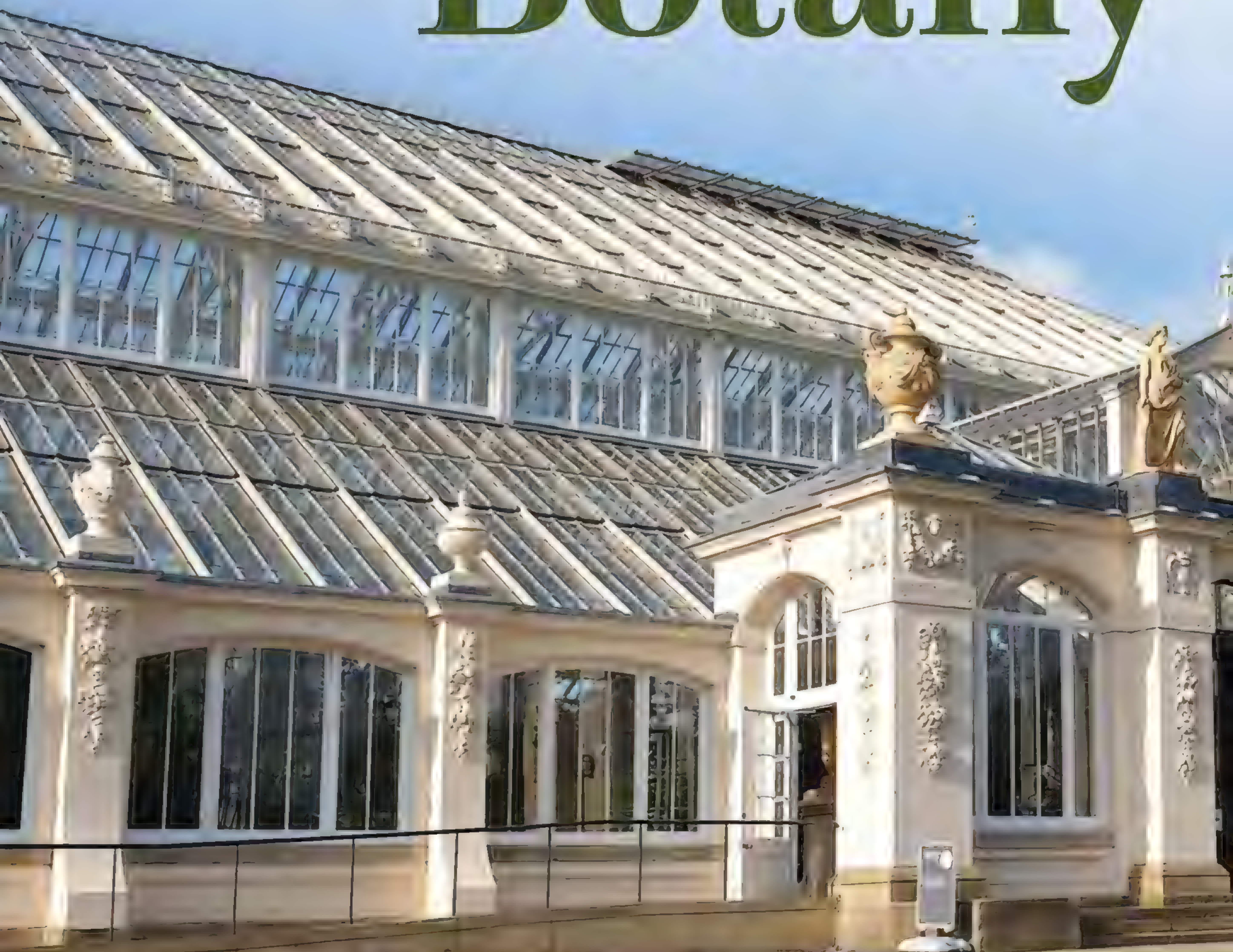


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KEW AT WAR

Bombs & Botany



Craig Moore burrowed deep into the archives to unearth how the Royal Botanic Gardens rose to carry out tasks of national importance in World War Two

For many years I had heard of Barnes Wallis's connection with Kew Gardens. The innovator and inventor, famous for designing the Wellington bomber and the Upkeep mine ('bouncing bomb'), reputedly had holes cut from every floor in the pagoda at Kew Gardens to evaluate new bomb designs in secrecy.

I decided to book a reading seat in the Royal Botanic Gardens' archives to confirm whether the story was true or simply a rumour that had taken root. When I explained my goal to the staff and picked out the documents I wanted to look at, they were very helpful and intrigued. They normally deal with botanists, people researching plant hunters, the origins of certain plants, or different cultivation methods – military experiments are very much a rarer drop to them. I also asked for files on what other wartime projects may have occupied staff at Kew Gardens. What I unearthed was surprising, and the first bit

of new information I discovered related to the pagoda.

Pioneering pagoda

Construction of this great – if incongruous – building was completed in 1762, it having been designed by Sir William Chambers for the Princess Dowager of Wales, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, who had expanded the gardens.

Octagonal and ten storeys high, the lowest storey is 26ft in diameter and 18ft high. Above this, each successive floor decreases in diameter by one foot, but the height remains the same. The total height of the pagoda is 163ft – making it a particularly significant building, as in 1762, there were very few of that height in Britain. By the time of its completion, carved and colourful wooden dragons crouched on every one of the angles of its ten roofs. On a clear day the top of the pagoda could be seen from Windsor Castle, some 16 miles away.

The document I located revealed that Barnes Wallis had not been involved in the bomb trials within the pagoda. It is a sad end to those rumours, but there are more than a few shoots of truth to it, regardless

During World War Two the Temperate House greenhouse was smashed by a German bomb. Imagine the clean up!
CRAIG MOORE



RIGHT: Before and during World War Two the pagoda at Kew Gardens was used for important war work
CRAIG MOORE

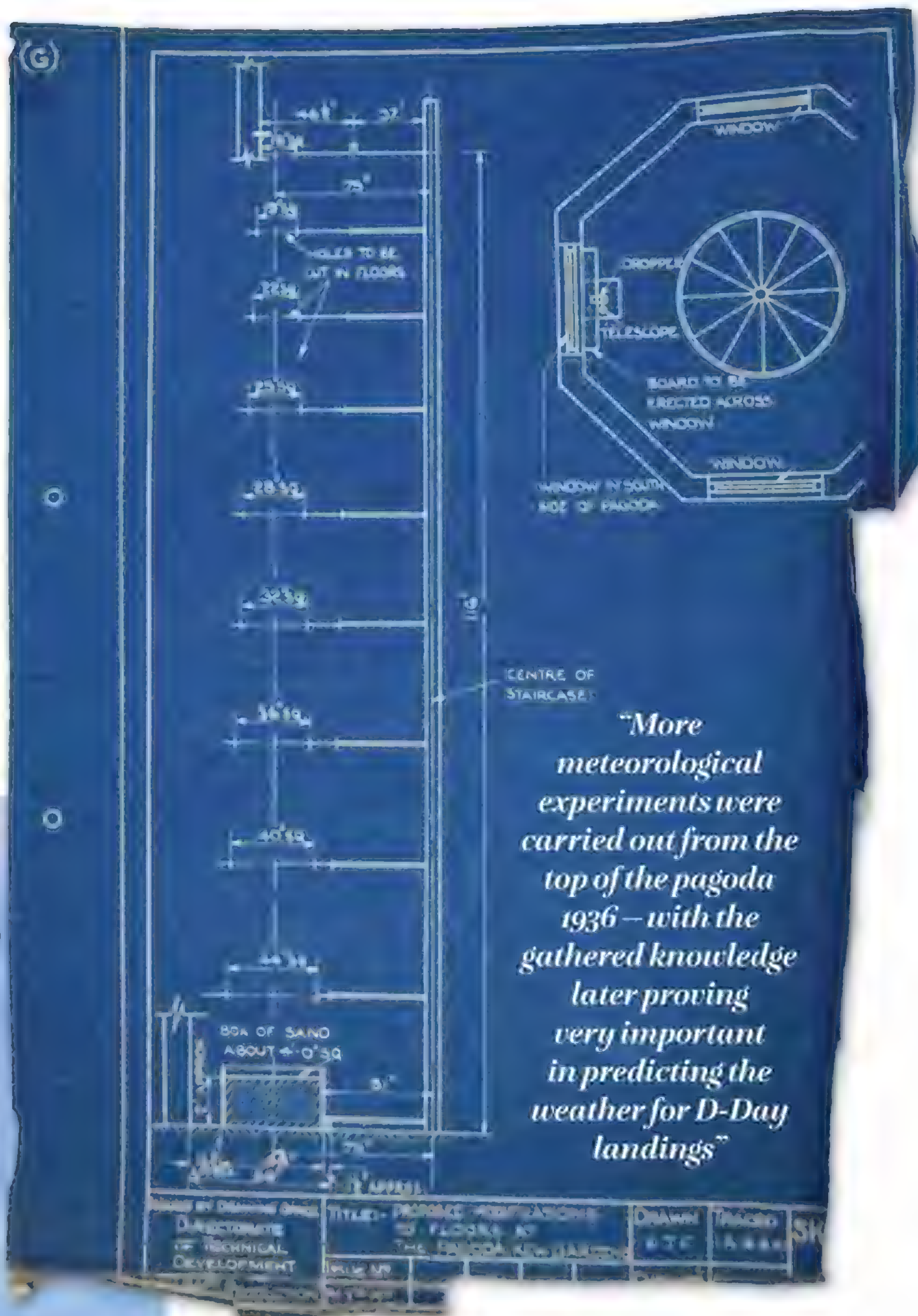
of whether Wallis was involved or not. The papers confirmed that holes indeed had been made in every floor of the building to enable the test-dropping of model bombs – each possessing different types of tail fins.

Letters state that the start date for these bomb-dropping experiments was in September 1942, but the negotiations with the powers-that-be seeking permission to use the pagoda for this war-like purpose began in September 1940. Plans for the conversion were sent to the director of Kew Gardens on March 24, 1941. It appears that the Royal Aircraft Establishment scientist in charge was a Dr Richardson, and on October 3, 1942, he warned the Kew staff and Richmond police that as of Monday October 5, 1942, he and his team would be making a lot of smoke as part of their experiments in the pagoda and that the windows would be left open.

It was not the first time that the great pagoda had been re-purposed for science. At the back of these

RIGHT: The proposed modifications to the floors of the pagoda at Kew Gardens showing the holes to be cut on each storey and the sand box at the base in which the test bombs would land CRAIG MOORE

An observer to spot incoming V1 flying bombs was later placed on the ninth floor of the structure while experiments were ongoing CRAIG MOORE



"More meteorological experiments were carried out from the top of the pagoda 1936 – with the gathered knowledge later proving very important in predicting the weather for D-Day landings"

documents were unexpected letters dated between May 31, 1934 and August 24, 1936. These were sent by Francis Whipple, superintendent of the Air Ministry, Meteorological Office London, Upper Air Section of the Kew Observatory.

The first letter in the series concerned a request to use the pagoda: "Mr L H G Dines, who is our expert on exploring the upper air with balloons, is wanting to find the rate at which his meteorograph would fall in the absence of the balloon. We think that the pagoda

would be a suitable place for the experiment."

The experiment of dropping apparatus from the top of the pagoda to assess velocity was conducted on June 5, 1934, with the required information obtained. More meteorological experiments were authorised and carried out from the top of the pagoda two years later in 1936 – with the gathered knowledge of the upper air jet stream later proving very important in predicting the weather for D-Day landings in 1944.

Floral fighters

Kew Gardens was closed to the public for a few weeks following the outbreak of World War Two, so that air raid shelters could be constructed and safeguards implemented to protect the site's valuable collection. Volunteer firefighters and members of staff were on duty every night.

Unlike other parts of London, Kew escaped the heaviest bombing although during the Blitz, 30 high explosive bombs fell in the area, causing extensive damage to the glass of the Temperate House greenhouse, Palm House, North Gallery, Herbarium, library and Museum No.1. The Stableman's house was the only building to receive a direct hit, but luckily, no one was seriously injured.

Unexpectedly, visitor numbers increased during the war years. This ran hand-in-hand with large areas of the lawn being dug up and turned into vegetable allotments for London residents. The staff even ran a demonstration 'model' allotment, strictly following guidance given to the public by the Ministry of Agriculture in its 'Dig for Victory' pamphlets. Staff

A sergeant instructing two members of the Local Defence Volunteers, the forerunner to the Home Guard. The Royal Botanic Garden had its own Home Guard platoon IWM



members were trained and always on hand to advise the public about the best methods of growing different types of vegetables.

After the fall of France, the fear of a German invasion was very real. Kew Gardens has large areas of open green spaces and is in very close proximity to Kew Bridge. There was a possibility that

German paratroopers could land in these open spaces and then assault and capture the bridge that spanned the Thames river.

Therefore, the Kew Gardens No.4 Platoon, Home Guard, was formed and had a strength of 44 men, split into four sections. Each had ten men and a leader, and regularly conducted exercises and

Large parts of the botanic garden were turned over to wartime agriculture, with demonstration allotments established as a teaching aid IWM



KEW AT WAR

drills to ensure they were in the best shape possible to deal with any potential German airborne invader. Accordingly, the pagoda took on another martial function, serving as an observation post.

The guardsmen were divided into groups, with each stationed at one of the exit gates. Members of the Putney Home Guard would often play the role of enemy soldiers in exercises. When the 'enemy' was sighted, the Kew Gardens Home Guard was contacted by telephone and directed to its location. Later, the Kew Gardens No.4 Platoon was merged with a company of the 63rd (Richmond) Battalion, Home Guard, whose headquarters were in Ormond Lodge, Richmond.

V-weapons and vitamins

The pagoda had other military uses during the war. Hitler, furious at the successful landing of the Western Allies in Normandy in 1944, began launching his 'vengeance weapons' onto London. V1 bombs could often be heard in the skies overhead as they approached their target. Civilians learned to dive for cover once the flying bomb's engines cut out and the warhead plummeted to the ground.

To help combat this, from July 1944, a spotter was installed in the pagoda, as it gave a clear view of the skies above the gardens. When a V1 was sighted, the spotter would activate a garden-wide warning system of electric bells and horns that gave staff, volunteers and visitors time to seek shelter.

As part of an experiment requested by the Ministry of Food, Kew sowed chips or slices of potato instead of full seed potatoes to increase yield. Crops grown using this method proved better than those grown the normal way IWM



BELOW: The protection of Kew Bridge was one of the objectives of Kew Gardens' Home Guard platoon CRAIG MOORE

At the time, the bomb-dropping experiments in the pagoda were ongoing – a July 7, 1944 letter reveals that the chief superintendent of the Royal Aircraft Establishment was told an observer was to be stationed on the ninth floor. But there was more war work ahead for

the green-fingered specialists at Kew, who realised early on that the import of exotic plant material used to manufacture certain medicines was going to be problematic.

Citrus fruit, for example, provided a valuable source of Vitamin C, but these fruits would be in short supply

“Arrangements were made to explore the possibility of increasing the collection of native British wild plants – and to mobilise it for war purposes



thanks to rationing and the U-boat threat, so Kew began to concentrate on sourcing local alternatives.

It also looked to its extensive collection of wild plant material for potential medicinal drug extraction, but arrangements were also made to explore the possibility of increasing the collection of native British wild plants – and to mobilise it for war purposes.

Foxglove leaves, autumn crocus and meadow saffron corms were used to manufacture potent pain-relieving and anti-inflammatory drugs. Dandelion roots were also needed, as these were rich in the carbohydrate inulin, used to relieve constipation and improve digestion. Other plant material on the wanted list included belladonna, elderflowers, valerian roots, broom tops, sweet chestnut and coltsfoot leaves, comfrey leaves and roots, line flowers, tansy, wild thyme, yarrow, violet leaves, wood betony and a further 24 plants.

Instructors in plant identification were taken from the ranks of the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Manufacturers of cigarette cards were also asked to look in their warehouses for old stocks of cards depicting the plants wanted for harvesting. The Natural History Museum agreed to provide postcards of some to further assist in identification.

Members of the Women's Institute set up county depots where all harvested medicinal plants could be dried and forwarded to drug merchants. In the north, members of the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes did the same, as did members of the Women's Voluntary Service.

Beating the Nazis with nettles

Britain's botanical specialists were called on in other ways, too. Rubber was a vital commodity and Britain, via Malaya, had the monopoly

*Your own vegetables
all the year round...*



if you

**DIG FOR
VICTORY NOW**

Dig for Victory posters were a common sight in wartime Britain, and Kew helped support the scheme through instruction CRAIG MOORE

– until Japan's occupation of the region in early 1942.

Malaya was also rich in tin, but this could be sourced from elsewhere – not a practical solution when it came to rubber. Not only was Malaya home to the lion's share of the world's rubber plantations, but the material was vital to the operation of a modern military and desperately needed by armament factories to produce aircraft, ships, tanks and lorries. Botanists in Britain were tasked with finding an alternative supply of rubber-yielding plants to be grown locally.

Kew's specialists also began exploring the possibility of using stinging nettles to produce paper and reinforce the plastic used in aircraft construction, and to use its chlorophyll in medical and food products. The war generated a shortage of wood pulp from Scandinavia, mainland Europe and Canada, so nettles were the viable alternative. Its central stems comprised long, strong fibres that could be turned into pulp and subsequently paper. Research highlighted that during World War One, Germany had harvested 10,000 tonnes of nettles to yield 1,500 tonnes of fibre, the majority being turned into paper.

In September 1940, scientists started to examine different harvesting methods. Cutting nettles



with a scythe was problematic, as undesirable non-fibrous weeds would also be collected in the process. Hand cutting with a knife or secateurs proved to be the best method for the quality of crop, but was time-consuming and inefficient. The stems would be collected and tied into bundles, each weighing 10-15lb. They were then stood on end for drying, much like sheaves in a cornfield.

After three days, the leaves would be removed, before being transported to a collection centre to enable the chlorophyll to be extracted. The stems were taken to produce natural fibre while the wood cores were used in the process of making artificial silk. Nettle leaves could likewise be used to extract a form of sugar, laevulose (also known as fructose), used in many foodstuffs.

The next problem was finding a workforce. Kew needed people who would be available to assist with its experiments and to harvest nettles: child labour was considered, so school authorities and the Scout Association were contacted about the possibility of using children to collect nettles. It may seem shocking to us today, but there was a war on, after all.

The Uxbridge Boy Scouts had the 'privilege' of being the first group involved, but perhaps it backfired... a comment from the supervising scientist in a letter dated September 18, 1940 read: "Our experience with Boy Scouts has shown that very miscellaneous and unsuitable material will also be collected by them unless specific instructions are given. The Scouts display a great deal of enthusiasm, but it was mostly misdirected."

He later suggested that it was necessary for Kew Gardens to print an instructional pamphlet to be issued to all the groups taking part in the experiment to help alleviate these problems.

There was another problem, a letter from William Nash Ltd Paper Merchants shows that the firm had fixed ideas about papermaking – and felt it beneath them to handle material collected by the Scouts. The director of Kew Gardens replied, informing the company that the tonnes of nettles collected in Germany during the last war had largely been gathered by children, and that the German government had made a fresh appeal for nettles during the current war. He stated:

Kew's assistant curator S A Pearce gives advice on growing food. He has soaked peas in a jar of paraffin to discourage mice from eating them after they have been sown HARRY TODD/GETTY



Curator of the Botanic Gardens, Mr Campbell (seated left), holds a daily meeting with his staff IWM



"It is an admission of defeat to imply that British boys cannot achieve as much as German ones."

Substitutes and scrutiny

Fortunately, three other papermills were ready and willing to receive deliveries of the harvested nettles. One was in London, another in Hitchin and a third in Long Melford. Moreover, On September

23, 1940, the Devon County Education Committee provisionally agreed that it would encourage the collection of nettles by schoolchildren in summer 1941.

It had conducted a successful small-scale harvest experiment and believed it was worthwhile as it enabled children to contribute. Following this, more education authorities fell in line and agreed

"The next problem was finding a workforce: child labour was considered, so schools and the Scouts were contacted"



Two examples of paper made from nettles. The sample marked (A) was made from bast nettle fibre, (B) was made mainly from nettle wood fibre
CRAIG MOORE

to participate. A booklet of instructions, *Collection of Leaves and Roots of Common Wild Plants*, was sent to educational authorities throughout Britain for distribution to schools.

The vast amount of green waste from the hop-growing industry was also considered by Kew Gardens staff. It was found that the hop vine could provide fibrous pulp that could be used to produce paper and clothing. In fact, it had been suggested in England and in California as far back as 1857. The National Hop Board was asked to arrange for its collection, and after various trials, it was discovered that

nettle fibre was suitable for making fine paper, whereas the stringy hop fibre was better for coarser paper.

From 1942, exotic medicinal plants began finally trickling back into Britain from India. Kew scientists inspected samples from the cases of imported plant matter under a microscope. However, they found that frequently substitutes for the genuine articles and contaminants were included in the shipments – a waste of urgently needed shipping space and labour, and contributing to ongoing shortages of war material. It was the scientists' view that the trouble was due to Indian pickers possessing

no real knowledge of the required plants and poor quality control.

Kew asked the under-secretary of state for India to contact various Indian university botanical departments to arrange for harvested plants to be inspected before export.

It all meant that in a time of war, the Royal Botanic Garden mobilised its scientists and botanists to take national lead in organising the harvesting of native medicinal plants required by the pharmaceutical industry during World War Two, in addition to its other work and technical assistance.

Few visitors today realise the sheer importance of the role undertaken by its staff and scientists during the war to significantly alleviate national shortages in medicines – and how even the quaint pagoda would assist in conducting important military experiments. **BW**

Mr Campbell, as Kew Gardens curator, oversees seed harvesting from the camomile lawn by members of the Women's Land Army. Camomile was planted at the request of the Ministry of Home Security as a quick-growing, wiry camouflage for new airfields IWM




To the Ruhr and back

Andrew Thomas examines the part played by one squadron as Bomber Command's fury was unleashed in a set-piece assault on German industry

Germany's Ruhr region and its surrounding area was the largest concentration of industrial areas in the country – not only of coal and steel and other heavy plant, but also the huge Krupp munitions factories.

Accordingly, the flak and searchlight belt that protected the towns and cities of the Ruhr Valley was formidable, and was respected and feared in equal parts by the aircrews of Bomber Command.

When Dortmund, Essen, Duisburg,



One of 115 Squadron's distinctive Hercules radial-engine Lancaster Mk.IIs. This example, DS652/KO-B, is shown at East Wretham, but it was shot down during a raid on Bochum on June 12/13 P H T
GREEN COLLECTION

Bochum, Gelsenkirchen were the targets it always meant a hard trip, as the bombers would have to fly into probably the best-defended part of the Reich. Cologne, Düsseldorf and Wuppertal, although beyond the Ruhr, also formed part of the regional industrial conglomerate and likewise presented a tough challenge.

The first raid on the Ruhr came on May 15, 1940, with 99 bombers attacking following the initial German assault in the west. Barring a handful of lulls, such raids would continue for the rest of the war.

After one such break, the attacks resumed on October 10 with a raid designed to strike the Krupp factories at Essen, but thick fog covered the target. The following night some aircraft hit Hülse, but in early November shorter range targets became the norm with just the occasional excursion as far as the Ruhr.

Furious intent

However, when Air Marshal Arthur Harris took over Bomber Command, he signalled his intent to change this by launching three



'1,000 bomber' raids. Even so, this mighty assembly of air power paled in comparison to his aspirations and, once Bomber Command had reached a peak of strength, it was to unleash it all on a single target area.

Harris was ready for what he called his 'main offensive' by spring 1943. This was to last a year and feature a series of 'battles' where the 'Main Force' would repeatedly concentrate against a particular target or area, bombing it again and again until its destruction was deemed total. With



A 4,000lb GP bomb is prepared for loading on to a 115 Squadron Wellington in late 1942
VIA M HODGEDON

TOP: At the beginning of the Ruhr campaign, 115 Squadron was still using Wellington Mk.IIIs, such as this one, serial X3662
OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

BELOW: One of the Lancaster IIs used by 115 Squadron, DS629/KO-D, and its pilot, Squadron Leader Sharkey D STARKEY/N ROBINSON

the approaching summer nights, the Ruhr was the logical place to begin. Although the towns and cities of the region remained the priority, it had been recognised from the outset that none of these 'battles' could focus exclusively on one target, thus other areas continued to be attacked.

One of the dozens of squadrons directed against the Ruhr was 115 Squadron, a long-serving formation that had been operational since the start of the war. On the eve of battle in March 1943, the squadron, under Wing Commander Alan Sibley, an Australian, was still flying Wellingtons but was in the throes of re-equipping with the Hercules-engined Lancaster II, becoming the first squadron to be fully equipped with this variant.



"The defensive belt that protected the towns and cities of the Ruhr was formidable, and was respected and feared in equal parts by the aircrews of Bomber Command"



THE BATTLE OF THE RUHR

The Battle of the Ruhr began on the night of March 5/6 when 442 bombers attacked Essen, targeting the Krupp armament works. The centre of the target was accurately marked, and the Wellingtons bombed in the second wave. In just 40 minutes some 160 acres of the city, including much of the Krupp complex, was destroyed or damaged. The squadron escaped without loss and its next attack came a week later. On the night of March 12/13, it returned to Essen again bombing the Krupp works; assessors claimed a further 30% damage was inflicted.

However, among the 23 bombers lost was a 115 Squadron aircraft, Wellington Mk.III BJ756/KO-Q, flown by Sergeant Leo Fallon. The bomber was shot down over Holland on its inbound flight by a Bf 110G night fighter flown by Leutnant Oskar Köstler of 10./NJG 1. It was the squadron's final Wellington loss.

Innenhafen immolated

Two nights earlier, the squadron had begun Lancaster operations. These started with an aerial mining sortie, but it also used the new aircraft alongside its last Wellingtons in the next attack on the Ruhr on the night of March 26/27.

Duisburg's great Innenhafen, a 220-acre inland harbour connected to the Rhine, was the target, but thick cloud generated one of the few failures of Harris's effort against the Ruhr. In the first week of April, after switching to Berlin and other targets, 115 Squadron found itself flying back to Essen when the Main Force was again unleashed.

Two further attacks on Duisburg followed in a week and the same city was struck on April 26, when more than 560 bombers set out

The vast Krupp armaments and heavy plant production facility in Essen, and its bomb-shattered locomotive factory
OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH



BELOW: A 115 Squadron Lancaster being prepared at East Wretham, Norfolk, for its next Ruhr sortie
D STARKEY/N ROBINSON



against it. The raid was only partially successful, and the German defences claimed 21 bombers – including Pilot Officer Harvey Minnis and his crew, who were on their 27th mission, their Lancaster Mk.II, DS609/KO-M, coming down in the target area. The subsequent award of the DFC to the Canadian pilot noted that he had: “...attacked many of the enemy’s most heavily defended targets including Hamburg, Duisburg, Berlin and Essen”. It added: “He has always completed his missions with courage and determination. This officer has set an example of the highest order by his skill and courage, which have been a source of inspiration to all.”

Pilot Officer Edward Foster and Sergeant Wilfred Timms, who were also lost, were also decorated.

May opened with Essen the target once more, followed by Dortmund and then on May 12 Duisburg was revisited, causing considerable damage to the Thyssen steelworks and to shipping and barges in the

Innenhafen. Bochum was bombed the next night, and the bombers returned to Dortmund on May 23.

This was the largest raid of the battle, and large areas of the city – including the Hoesch steelworks – were devastated.

Lethal debut

Two nights later, Düsseldorf was attacked again, and after midnight on May 28 bombs once more rained down on Essen, but 23 bombers failed to return – 19 apparently the victims of night fighters.

However, one aircraft that fell to German radar-directed flak was a 115 Squadron Lancaster II, DS655/KO-M, which was flown by Pilot Officer Gordon Cammell a 19-year-old New Zealander who was the sole survivor from his crew as he was thrown from the bomber when it exploded.

Aircraft from 115 Squadron returned to the so-called ‘Happy Valley’ two nights later, when a total of more than 700 bombers



ABOVE: A veteran 115 Squadron crew that would fly many operations during the Ruhr battle. Left to right: Sgt Nobby Clark, Flt Sgt Jack Williamson, Sgt Colin Morse, Sgt Fred Jones, Flt Sgt Bert Bradford (the pilot), Sgt Mick Read and Flt Sgt Rex Griffiths AFMNZ

Groundcrew have marked this 4,000lb ‘Cookie’ bomb before loading it into a 115 Squadron Lancaster destined for the Ruhr AFMNZ



Bombs silhouetted as they fall from a Lancaster onto a well-marked Ruhr target 115 SQUADRON RECORDS

headed for Wuppertal. This town had distinctive geography, being long and narrow, and accurate marking enabled the bombing to be particularly precise, rending severe damage in what was the most successful attack of the campaign. However, the strong defences again took a toll and among the 36 bombers lost was 115 Squadron’s DS627/KO-R. This crashed in the Netherlands having been shot down by Oberfeldwebel Fritz Schellwat of 5./NJG 1, taking Sergeant Charles Fleming’s crew with it.

Another 115 Squadron bomber was attacked that night. Flying Officer Andrews’ Lancaster, DS616/KO-G, was also encountered by a night fighter and sustained severe damage to its engines, rudder and fuselage, but Andrews was able to stagger home and pull off a crash landing.

There was a lull in operations before Düsseldorf was attacked on June 11/12, the most destructive raid of the war on that city. The weather was good, perhaps contributing to this result, but the near-cloudless conditions also meant German defences brought down 42 bombers, including Squadron Leader Douglas Fox’s crew, shot down by a Heinkel He 219 of I./NJG 1, flown by Major Werner Streib. It was a lethal and effective introduction to combat for the new type.

Despite these losses, the relentless pace of the RAF’s bombing operations was to continue.



The following night, Bochum was the subject of Bomber Command's attentions, a devastating attack pulled off with accurate target-marking despite complete cloud cover, and reconnaissance flights showed huge destruction. Among the 24 bombers lost was DS652/KO-B flown by Flight Sergeant Ian Ruff, which came down off the Dutch coast, near Zandvoort, with the crew killed. Subsequently, just three bodies washed ashore. The aircraft was shot down by Hauptmann Hans-Joachim Jabs just before 0240hrs. His next victory came inside a half-hour, as he downed a Lancaster of another squadron in the same area.

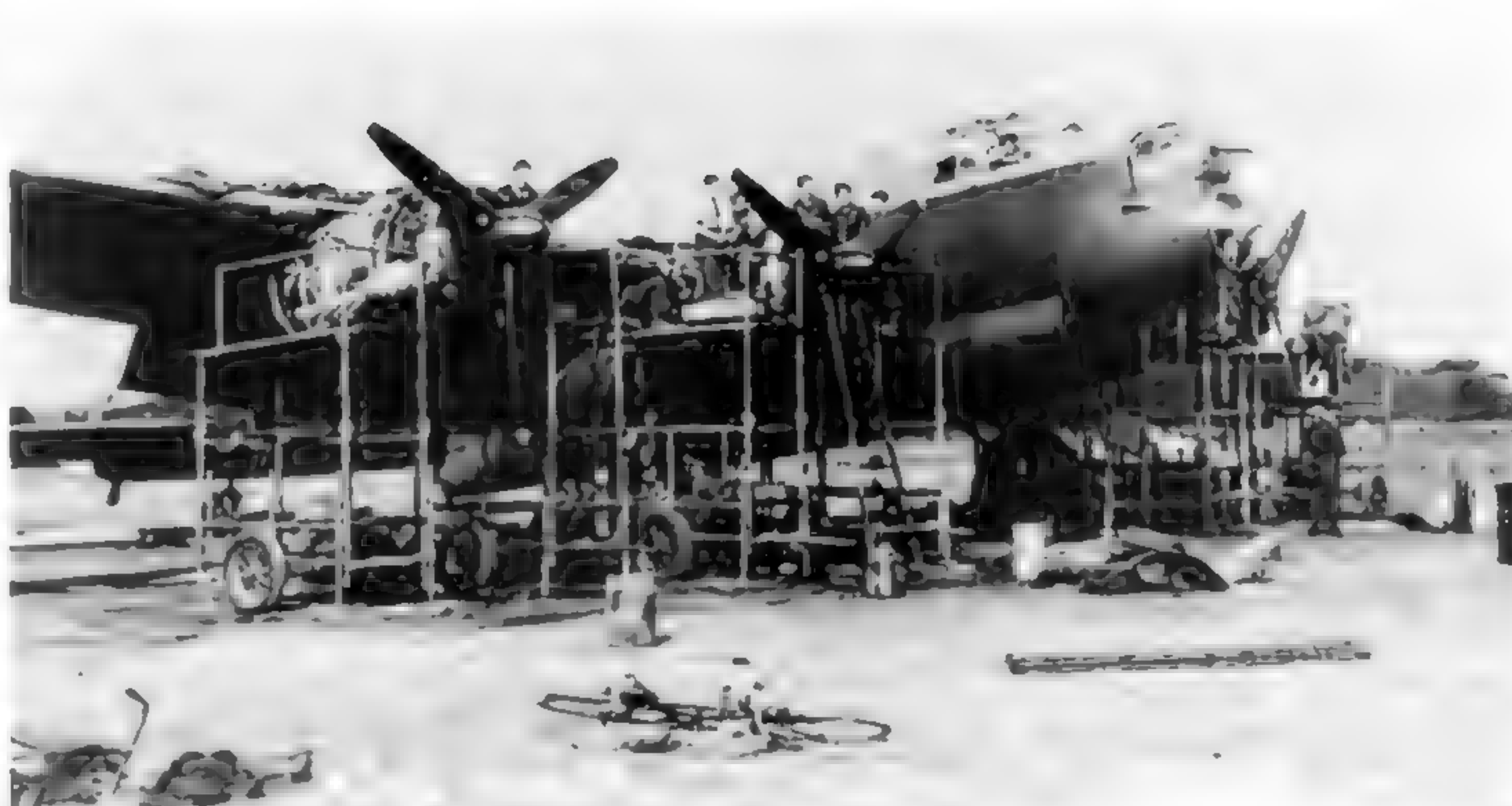
A rare award

Across the next ten days, Cologne, Oberhausen, Krefeld, Müllheim and Wuppertal were attacked, but with 133 bombers lost, although 115 Squadron escaped unharmed. The same could not be said of its venture to Gelsenkirchen's oil works on June 25/26, when it lost DS666/KO-J and Sergeant Ron Rashley's crew.

Two crewmen look at the damage to Lancaster Mk.II DS669/KO-B after a fighter attack over Cologne in which the turret, still with its hapless gunner, was lost 115 SQUADRON RECORDS

ABOVE RIGHT: The forgotten heroes of the effort were the groundcrews, such as those shown here working on one of 115's Lancaster IIs 115 SQUADRON RECORDS

BELOW LEFT AND RIGHT: Bombs fall, a Halifax passes and smoke rises from Cologne's Müllheim district. The damage wrought on the city was severe, as seen in this 1945-dated photograph showing its cathedral standing alone among blasted buildings and fallen bridges OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH



The final raid of the month was the climax of the Battle of the Ruhr. Bomber Command ranged against Cologne on the night of June 28, the first of three heavy raids to take place there in a matter of days. The dark night hindered the defences, but 28 bombers were still downed.

One damaged aircraft was Sergeant Bill Jolly's Lancaster. Attacked the burning city by two Wilde Sau (Wild Boar) Fw 190s, their fire blew off the rear turret, which fell to earth with the unfortunate gunner, Sergeant Geoffrey White. The crippled bomber was also on fire, but, after a struggle, Sergeants Edwin Hall and Ray Crowther extinguished the flames, enabling it to get home. Hall received a rare CGM (Flying), and Jolly and Crowther DFMs.

The bombers returned to Cologne four nights later when the aiming point was the industrial areas on the Rhine's east bank, 115 Squadron helped inflict substantial damage – though another crew was lost. Then, on the night of July 25/26, 700 bombers returned to Essen when the

Krupp armament works suffered its most destructive raid of the war. The last raid of the campaign, directed against Remscheid, saw 270 aircraft destroy 80% of the town.

'Butch' Harris's crews grimly battled into the deadly heart of the Ruhr to win their first set-piece battle. The worth of the campaign's material objective is still debated as part of the wider strategic bombing discussion that has been played out in the history books. Nevertheless, Germany could do little to stop the tide of bombers. Looking at the Ruhr in isolation, production was disrupted and the Germans were forced to concentrate defences and disperse factories to reduce the effects on its war-critical heartland.

A measured success, then, but one won at great cost; some 21,000 people were killed on the ground while 115 Squadron was just one RAF unit to be hit hard, with Bomber Command losing more than 670 aircraft and 5,000 airmen.

This equates to an average of 5% of the force sent on each raid. **BW**



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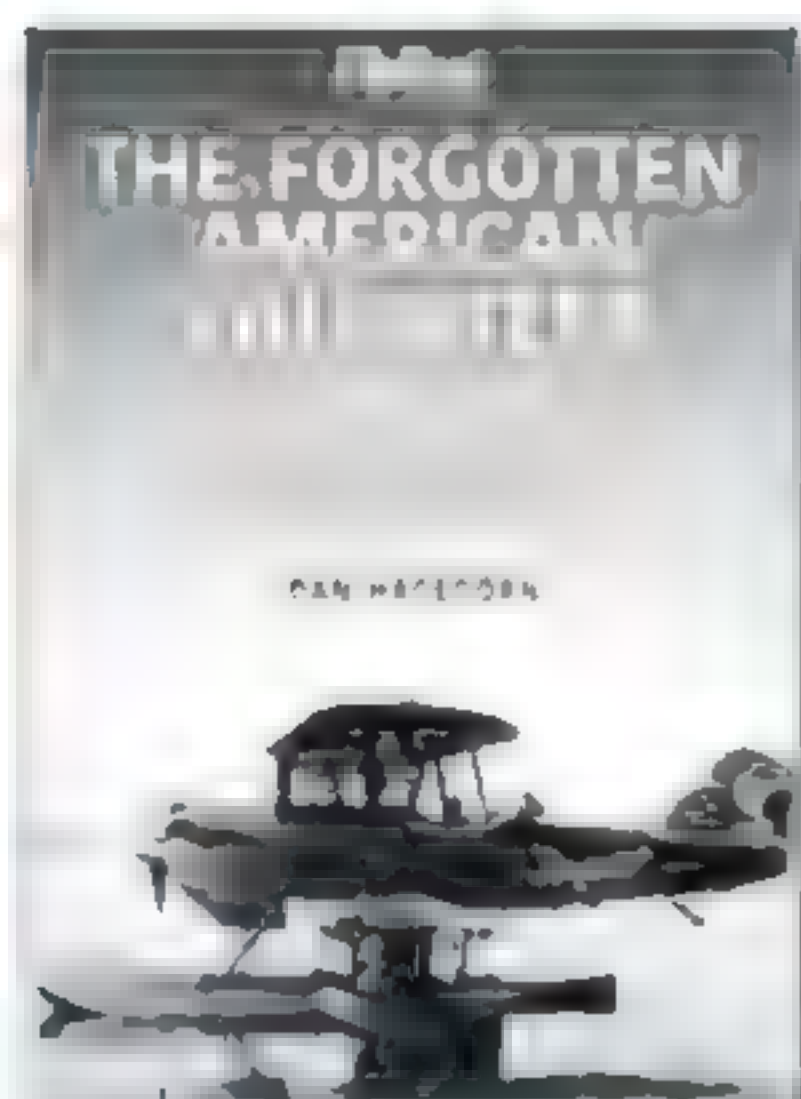
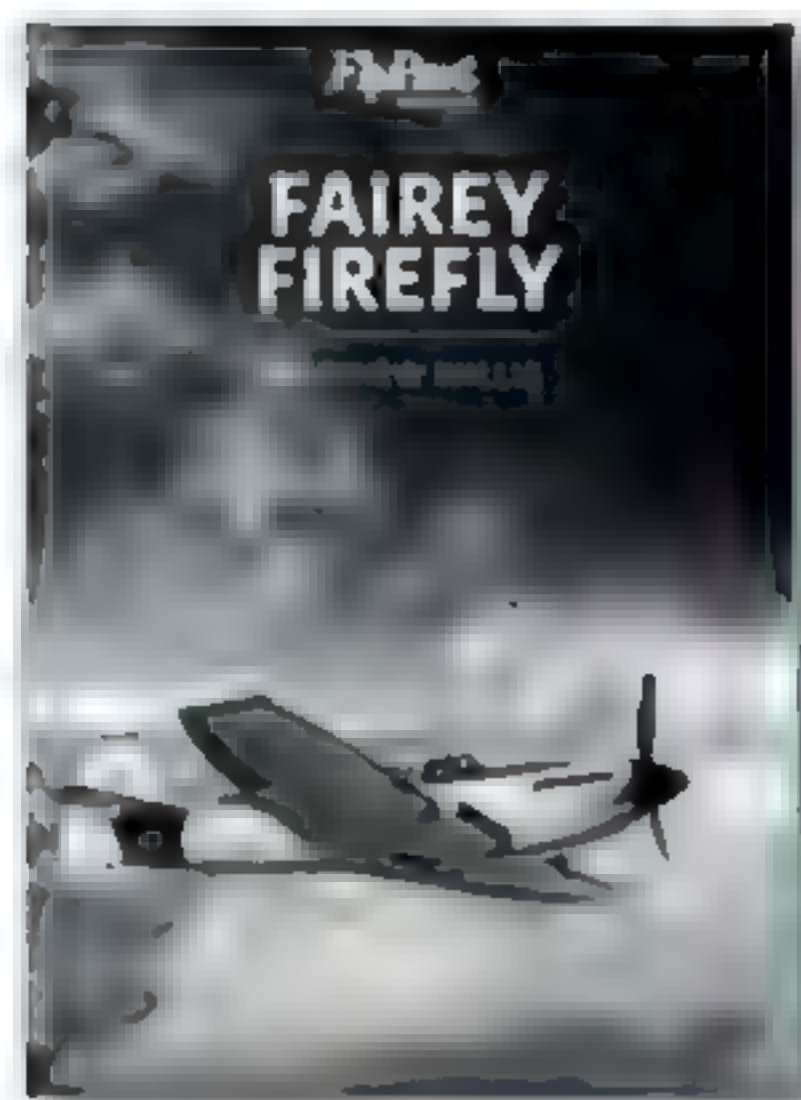
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IMAGE *of* WAR

IN PLAIN SIGHT

Redlynch, Salisbury Plain, March 1941

Although a mainstay of any modern military, individual camouflage was not widely adopted in World War Two. The British first adopted khaki in the 1840s and had developed camouflage designs for tents, but experimentation with disruptive patterns for uniforms began in 1939. Here, British soldiers on Salisbury Plain demonstrate four such patterns based on two- or three-tone Mk.VIII groundsheet raincoapes and precursors to jumpsuits and Denison smocks, using variations of dark olive, reddish brown and khaki. At that time, the patterns would largely have been hand-painted – meaning no two garments were the same. Camouflaged uniform, such as Denison smocks, would see use with Britain's airborne units from 1942. Their German counterparts, Fallschirmjäger, wore splittertarnmuster, a distinctive pattern first developed in the 1930s.

OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

**BRITAIN
AT WAR**



A patrol alongside the Tigris. At this point the atmosphere was relatively calm, though that would soon change. 11 JULY 2003

Having completed our successful entry into Basra, the BBC press group decided it was time to disembark, so the media escorts, comprising Captain Tony Booth and myself, were put at work and we returned to looking for sleeping dodges within 3 Para battalions HQ.

The location was established as a former Iraqi Air Force base to the south of Al Ahsaib, but its role in operations was found to vary

on stations around Maysan province. There had been a change of command, with Lieutenant-Colonel John Lorrimer handing over to Lieutenant-Colonel Matthew Lowe.

Tedious hours spent monitoring traffic on the main road was relieved by the occasional incident. On one such event, a patrol searched for a pair of Land Rovers. Which was found to be a 'Mitsubishi' with 31 heavily armed Iraqi pickup trucks. The incident occurred late

at night, with the Iraqis intent on attacking a neighbouring village as part of a long-running feud. Although bloodlessly resolved, it was tense and typical of the internal security situations British forces were encountering, indicative of the fragile environment in which we operated at the time.

To get back over the ground, I reported to my old battalion. I think I was one of the few military participants to discuss this to

Following his advance to Basra as an armed escort to a BBC News team, paratrooper-turned-photographer **Craig Allen** was ordered to the Iraqi capital for a mission unique among British forces. Part II of II

FROM BASRA TO BAGHDAD

a position – and in demand – to record events, so this was granted. I arrived at 1 Paras positions at al-Amarah on April 26, 2003.

My timing was perfect as things were to start moving quickly.

Unexpected gift

On arrival at al-Amarah, I learned that a small convoy based around the British Para Troop Platoon had lined up and about to leave for Baghdad, some 130 miles away to

the north. Its mission was to secure the British embassy in the Iraqi capital and I was quickly cleared to accompany the force.

It didn't hurt that I had brought some kit capacity, and a couple of reporters were soon gratefully crowding themselves and their gear into the back of my Land Rover. As the convoy set off, the city of Baghdad was visible in the distance, a city of skyscrapers and modern buildings.

"A convoy was lined up and about to leave for the Baghdad, its mission to secure the British embassy, and I was quickly cleared to accompany the force"



3 Para WMIK crews working on their vehicles at the battalion's base south of al-Amarah



The arrival of British troops generated excitement. Locals watched with interest as the attached Royal Engineer party set about clearing the buildings and ensuring they were safe to enter. The 'wheelbarrow' robots so familiar from their use in Northern Ireland were deployed to make the initial entry, but no booby traps were discovered.

The embassy building was something of a time capsule. Abandoned in haste, Alwan and his boys had ensured that it had stood undisturbed. The interior was just as it had been left, with papers strewn about the abandoned offices, although everything was buried under a thick layer of

beside the alleged site of the biblical Garden of Eden, although it had seen better times.

When we arrived at Baghdad's outskirts, the city had already fallen. American armour guarded all entry points into the city, but we were soon past them and driving along busy streets. After months in the southern desert, we had finally reached the capital and were sure to pass Saddam Hussein's former palace en route to our objective.

The embassy had lain empty since it was abandoned in the build-up to the First Gulf War back in 1990. In the 13 years since, the Ottoman-era building had been looked after by caretaker Mehdi Alwan and his sons. With the help of an old Zastava – a Yugoslav-made Kalashnikov rifle – they had kept looters at bay in 1990 and in 2003. It meant that when our 1 Para force arrived, the building was amazingly – and unexpectedly – untouched.

Change of command: Lt-Col Lorimer hands over to Lt-Col Matthew Lowe



The 1 Para convoy pauses on the long road to Baghdad



The embassy caretaker was at the gates to greet us

BELOW: We added our names to the embassy visitors' book, along with a note to commemorate the reoccupation

city – soon to become the famous Green Zone – with its palaces and official buildings had been scene of heavy air strikes, but as we drove through the streets the city appeared to be largely intact. Bomb-damaged buildings were evident, but there was nothing like the level of destruction we'd anticipated.

Our route took in the central zone and palaces, then took us out to the international airport, where we came across an abandoned Fedayeen vehicle. This had been improvised from a Japanese pick-up truck complete with armour plating and a mount for a Soviet-made

accumulated dust. In the foyer we discovered a neatly folded Union flag and a visitors' book filled with well-known names, famous foreign correspondent Kate Adie among them. We added our own to the list of signatures and included a note to commemorate the reoccupation. Our initial entry on April 27, the first since the visit of the Turkish ambassador in January 1991, read: "Capt McDade & WO2 S Abbot, 1 PARA BG, reoccupied embassy after Operation Telic. God save The Queen. Untrunque Paratus."

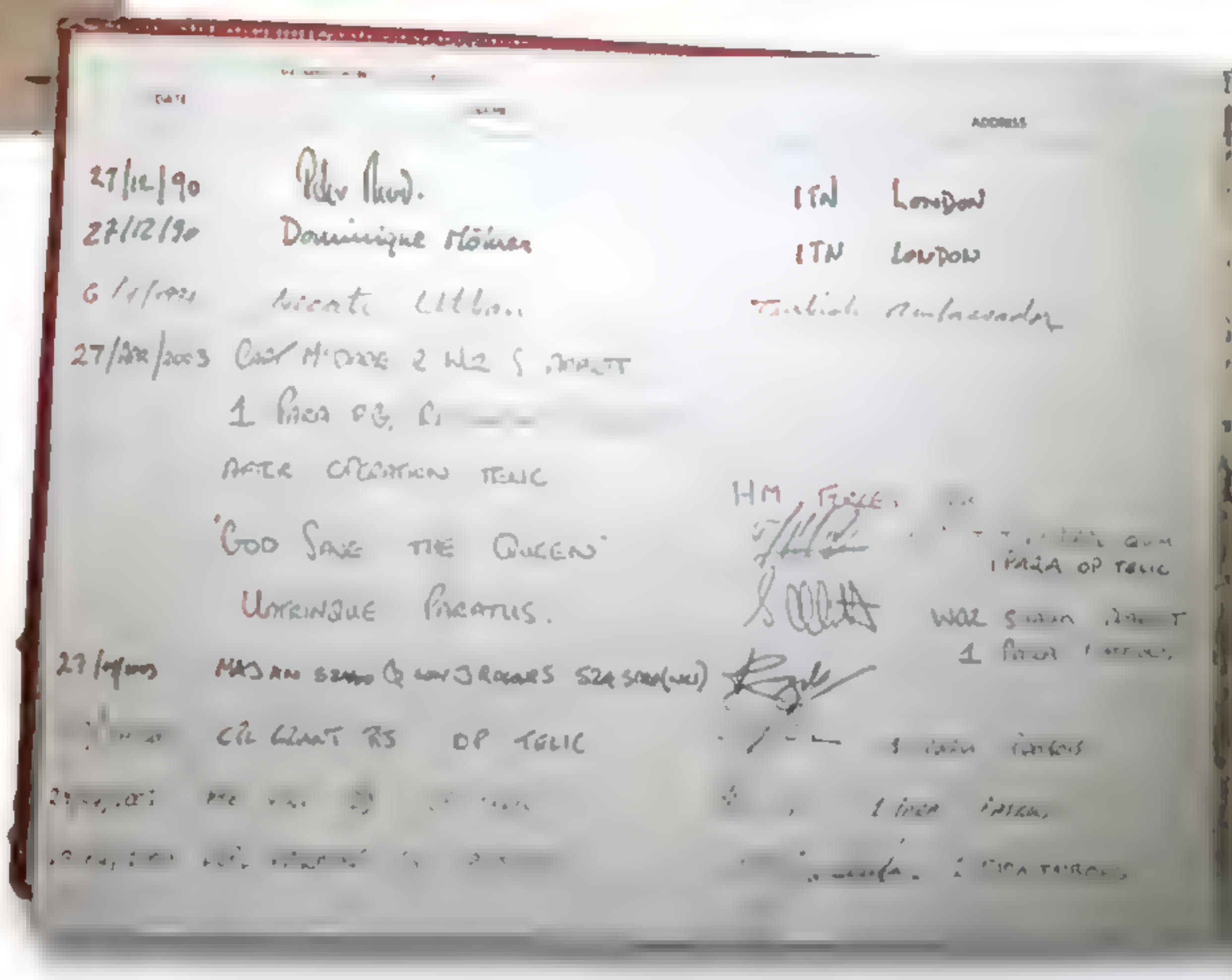
The morning after, Alwan turned up with his sons bearing an unexpected gift: the Royal Crest from the embassy, which he had kept hidden in his house for years. This was reinstalled in its rightful place above the main entrance, signifying the embassy's return to British ownership. Two days later, a journalist and photographer from *The Telegraph* arrived and the flags came out. It was an opportunity to pose for group photographs and savour the moment.

The next job was to 'clean house' – a mammoth task. The interior rooms were in total disarray, suggesting a hasty exit. We also constructed sandbagged sangers on the roof to help protect the site, and these offered a fine view out across the Tigris.

Sightseeing

Fortunately, although our presence continued to be a source of interest to the citizens of Baghdad, there was little sign of open hostility. As night fell and the call to prayer died away, gunfire would erupt and green tracer arced over the city, but by day things remained quiet.

Other than special forces elements, we were the only British troops in Baghdad, so the opportunity for military 'sightseeing' was too good to miss. We set out to explore and, at this point, it was still possible to travel safely in soft-skinned Land Rovers. The American presence was extremely overt, with their tanks and armoured vehicles protecting every key point. The government and administrative area of the



"Alwan turned up bearing an unexpected gift: the Royal Crest from the embassy, which he had kept hidden in his house for years"



Cleaning up the years of neglect was the first priority to make our new home habitable



heavy machine gun. The Saddam loyalists had done little to stem the advance of Coalition troops and had been quickly brushed aside.

The next stop was the palace of Uday Hussein, Saddam's eldest son and one-time heir apparent. His notoriety for extreme behaviour was well known: one famous example was the torturing of the entire national football team after they had lost an important match. Uday was eventually traced to Mosul



ABOVE: Embassy reoccupied, flags out and an opportunity to savour the moment

ABOVE LEFT: Alwan had hidden the embassy's Royal Crest in his home for years and returned it to us after we arrived

BELOW: Rooftop sangers provided both extra security and a fine view over the city and the Tigris

and killed in a gun battle with US forces. His once opulent palace had received some American 'attention', too, courtesy of the USAF. During the shock-and-awe bombing campaign that was the prelude to the invasion, the palace received a 2,000lb Joint Direct Attack Munition straight through its roof.

Despite the obvious damage, it was still possible to see the splendour of the palace and walk through the interior, which had

become home to American troops and a small British special forces detachment. In the car park we discovered Uday's gilded throne and I snapped one of the Para lads sitting on it. Doubtless the Americans were appropriating the throne as a souvenir!

Meanwhile, a routine was being established back at the embassy compound. Regular clearance patrols were mounted in the surrounding streets and these



performed several functions, ranging from being a visible security presence to gauging the safety of the building and testing local atmospherics. Everything appeared to be benign, despite the recent bombing and heavy American presence. Life seemed to continue as normal for the local people and, at this early stage of the occupation, there was remarkably little sign of any hostility.

Having spent just over a week at the embassy, orders came through that brought my sojourn in Baghdad to an end. My services were required elsewhere, so I packed up the Land Rover for the drive south again. I was able to join a supply column forming up at the airport. Using Route 6 – the main highway – we began the long journey back to al-Amarah.



ABOVE: Local children took a keen interest in our arrival and crowded round the guard post



Driving into central Baghdad and the area which would later become the famous Green Zone

“the situation on the ground remained tense and the brigade was stretched thin across the entirety of Maysan province”



A burned out APC and bomb-damaged buildings were evidence of the shock-and-awe bombing campaign

Once back with 3 Para, I learned the reason for my recall: an imminent visit by General Mike Jackson. As a paratrooper himself, he had a special interest in 16 Air Assault Brigade and arranged to visit both 1 and 3 Para to mark the end of the campaign. He arrived at 3 Para's airfield base by Chinook, accompanied by the Brigadier 'Jacko' Page and other senior officers, to be greeted by the new 3 Para CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Lowe, before going on to address the troops. On completion of the parade, the padre held a memorial service in honour of Private Andrew Kelly, who had been killed in a shooting on May 6, the battalion's only fatality.

It was now late May and operations were winding down. However, the Battalion had to cover a huge tactical area of responsibility. Over the coming months, things would get decidedly worse with the deaths of six Royal Military Policemen at Majar-al-Kabir and the outbreak of an insurgency.

Conflict on camera

Throughout my deployment to Iraq in 2003, my role was that of photographer. I was part of the latest generation of photojournalists and combat cameramen sent to record proceedings. In fact, my inspiration came directly from wartime forebears.

The image of the war photographer has been much romanticised over the years, and I grew up reading the accounts of Tim Page and Don McCullen, two



photojournalist famed for their coverage of the war in Vietnam. Military photographers have a long and distinguished history, from Ernest Brooks and his colleagues in World War One to the British Army Film and Photography Unit cameramen of the next war. The first APFPU photographers who recorded the 1981 Battle of Amman – Sergeants Walker, Clark and Smith – are heroes of mine and a model for the job.

The reality of covering a modern conflict is very different to how it is depicted and the embedding of journalists and photographers in operations has curtailed freedom of photojournalism. The job is also more dangerous, with media teams being actively targeted – most illustrated by footage of Stuart Ramsey's Sky News team as they accepted an ambush near Kufa last year, in which Ramsey and a cameraman were wounded. Indeed



TOP LEFT: A Footyevan 'industrial' left abandoned close to the airport.

RIGHT: Mike Ramsey, apologetic, and three Britishers, one of whom is a supply officer and a member of the team.

The first weeks of the campaign to Iraq saw more journalists killed than soldiers.

A historian of covering both the Persian Gulf and the Balkans, I have familiarity with the complexities and had travelled across. I also know how not to get in the way of soldiers. The BBC team on the road to Basra added together

"The reality of covering modern conflict is very different. The first weeks of the campaign saw more journalists killed than soldiers"





A rest stop on the long road south after my recall

BELOW: General Jackson addressing the battalion at the end of the campaign

BOTTOM: Our arrival back at RAF Brize Norton, where we were piped off the aircraft

dimension and it was interesting to watch them at work. Problems I did experience included having limited storage capacity and being unable to edit images in the field. This was a frustration that I subsequently addressed with the purchase of a small notebook computer.

The trick was to be in the right place at the right time, which was all down to good contacts, the freedom to move around the battle area and sheer luck. I relied on invaluable experience accrued while serving in Northern Ireland, but Iraq brought fresh challenges, not least because the campaign was my introduction to digital cameras – back then a relatively new technology.

I mobilised in the hope of recording the campaign for the Parachute Regiment, but this was by no means a given. That I found a place on the media team was down to luck and persistence. I equipped myself with two film cameras – a Nikon FM3A SLR and a Ricoh GR1 compact – but a few days before we crossed into Iraq, master photographer Giles Penfound supplied me with a Nikon D1H with 17-35mm lens, on the basis I would supply images to Army Media Ops.

I carried this rather hefty digital camera throughout and although its 2.74mp sensor is small by today's standards, it was more than capable of capturing quality images and had been designed with photojournalists in mind. One advantage of a digital camera is that they are more of a sealed unit, so there is no film to change or keep dust-free. Nevertheless, no matter how robust and well-sealed the camera was, dry desert dust inevitably found its way onto the sensor!

However, the deployment to Iraq was coming to an end. With major

“The countryside of Oxfordshire appeared impossibly green and verdant after several months in the desert”

combat operations concluded, reservists like myself were beginning to be released. My flight was called forward and I joined a convoy heading south, back across the border into Kuwait.

There was no gradual to return to normality, as we were soon boarding an aircraft and winging our way home. After a brief fuel stop at Cyprus, we were on final approach to Brize Norton within a few hours. The Oxfordshire countryside appeared impossibly green and verdant after several months in the desert and, as we stepped off into the cool of a spring evening, a piper was on hand to welcome us.

For most reservists, a rapid return to civilian life and the comforts of home followed. However, I returned to Iraq a year later, working as a contractor out of the new embassy in the Green Zone. But that, as they say, is another story. **BW**



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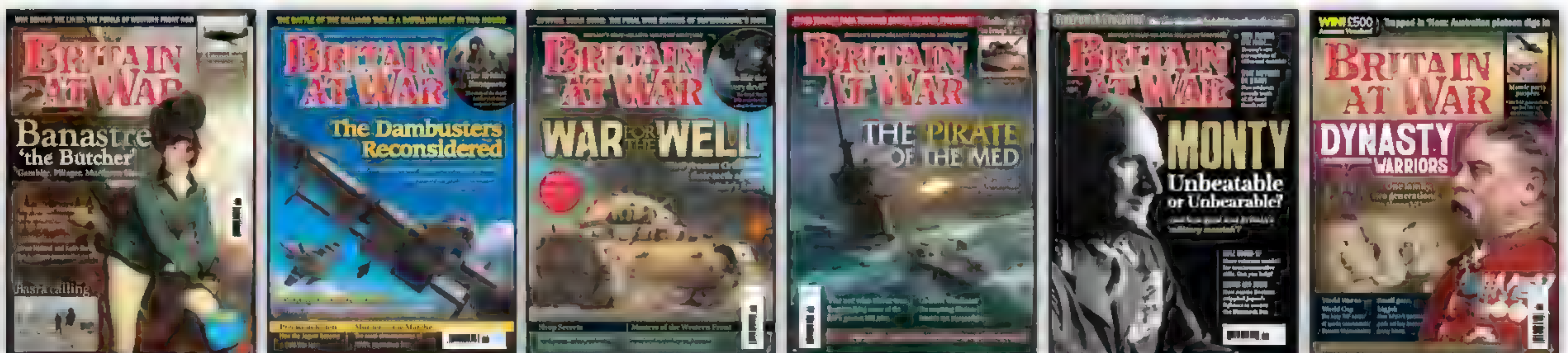
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British Coastal Forces

Two World Wars and After

By Norman Friedman

The Royal Navy is perhaps the most documented branch of the British military, its historiography vast and seemingly without end. From the Battle of Jutland to the sinking of HMS *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, to unit records on specific fleets, the published history of one of the most powerful navies the world has yet seen does not leave scholars or enthusiasts wanting.

However, one particular branch of the Royal Navy has been under-represented when compared to its vital contributions to operations in the 20th century: the Coastal Force.

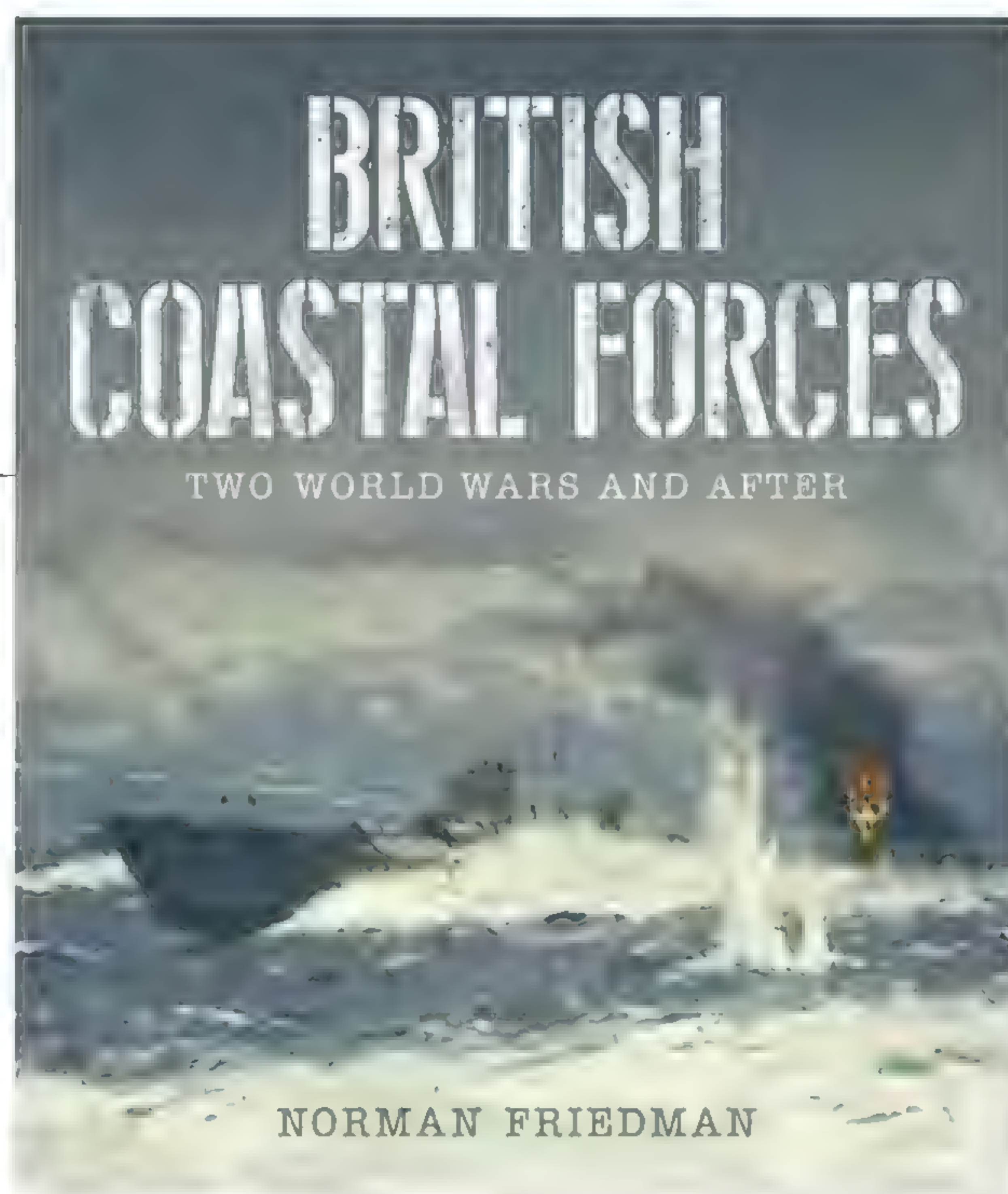
Acclaimed author Norman Friedman rights this wrong with the publication of *British Coastal Forces: Two World Wars and After*. As America's most prominent naval analyst, Norman is well-placed to dive into the oft-intricate and decade-spanning history of Britain's torpedo vessel fleet. Drawing on first-hand contemporary accounts, interviews, archival records and unit histories, Friedman has produced arguably the most comprehensive analysis of the subject to date.

Originally conceived during World War One as a force of fast-moving torpedo boats that could deliver munitions against enemy ships at anchor, the Coastal Force found itself taking part in major naval operations. In 1918, motor torpedo boats were deployed at the Zeebrugge Raid, laying smokescreens to cover HMS *Vindictive* and its escorts while they entered the defended harbour. Following this, the Coastal Force became a vital cog in the wider Royal Navy.

Often dismissed with fleeting remarks or footnotes in many official histories, the Coastal Forces nevertheless made significant contributions to victories in World War Two, in both the Mediterranean and the English Channel, fighting where larger, less expendable warships could not be risked.

Within the book, Friedman highlights the essential contribution of the Coastal Force to Allied victory in both world wars, providing background and detail to its many operational deployments through the use of primary sources such as after-action reports and the official findings of attached US naval observers. Such actions are visualised for the reader with the frequent provision of strategic and tactical context.

For example, Friedman dedicates an entire chapter to the role of the Coastal Force branch during Operation Neptune, the naval component of the D-Day landings. Their vital work in serving as escort craft, disrupting German coastal defences during the Overlord landings, as well as helping keep the Channel clear of U-boats and other enemy craft significantly influenced the positive overall Allied outcome. He dictates which Coastal vessels operated where, how they were used and the overall effects they had during the 'longest day'.



Perhaps the highlight of Friedman's work, however, and an appealing aspect for anyone interested in naval history, is the inclusion of a vast amount of technical information. Segmented into specific chapters, Friedman details the different types and classes of vessels used in each world war and beyond, with significant data provided on their production, costs, designs and specifications. Almost every class of torpedo boat also has an attached contemporary blueprint, a highly useful tool for any miniature modeller or collector, and the appendix also lists many various post-war craft, as well as the multitude of vessel types used for air-sea rescue missions on the coastline of the United Kingdom. Through this, the reader is presented with a visualisation of Royal Navy, specifically the Coastal Force's, technological learning curve from the earliest days in 1914 all the way through to the Cold War and beyond.

There is one small drawback to Friedman's book, that being that the structure of *British Coastal Forces: Two World Wars and After* is not entirely effective. Due to the vast amount of technical and operational data spread over 14 chapters, information is covered more than once. The reader often finds themselves reading the same specifications over and over, which can be overwhelming. With this in mind, this book is far removed from being a relaxing, casual afternoons read.

Having said that, Friedman's work is not intended to be an engaging narrative of the experiences of the personnel fighting in the Coastal Force, nor an exhaustive report of the branch's many victories and losses. Given his expertise as a naval analyst, the author has created as a fantastic and valuable reference work and will be a highly useful resource for any naval enthusiast, modeller or student of history.

Reviewed by Tom Baker

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References/Notes: Yes

Appendices: Yes

V Force Boys All New Reminiscences by Air and Ground Crews Operating the Vulcan, Victor and Valiant in the Cold War

By Tony Blackman & Anthony Wright

The latest volume to be released in Grub Street's long-running Boys series, is a highly readable edition covering Britain's 'nuclear airmen'. Inside is a cornucopia of stories from former V-Bomber aircrew and, pleasingly, groundcrew. The authors offer a range of experiences spanning the nuclear tests in the 1950s and QRA in the 1960s to memories of radar reconnaissance and in-flight refuelling in the mid-1950s to the Gulf War. There are some fascinating contributions from tanker crews supporting the 'Black Buck' attacks on the Falkland Islands – particularly

interesting is an account of one crew being engaged by Royal Navy warships having been misidentified as an Argentine Boeing 707 'snooper.' Another fascinating contribution comes from a navigator who flew all three V-Force aircraft – bombing Valiants, tanking Victors, then back to bombers on Vulcans – offering a valuable comparison. The final piece, however, deserves the last word, as it shows the flight authorisation sheet for the Black Buck raid, outlining the

task in just five words. It is one heck of a contrast given that a peacetime sortie needed about ten lines!

If you missed this book in hardback, it is well worth finding now

Reviewed by Andrew Thomas

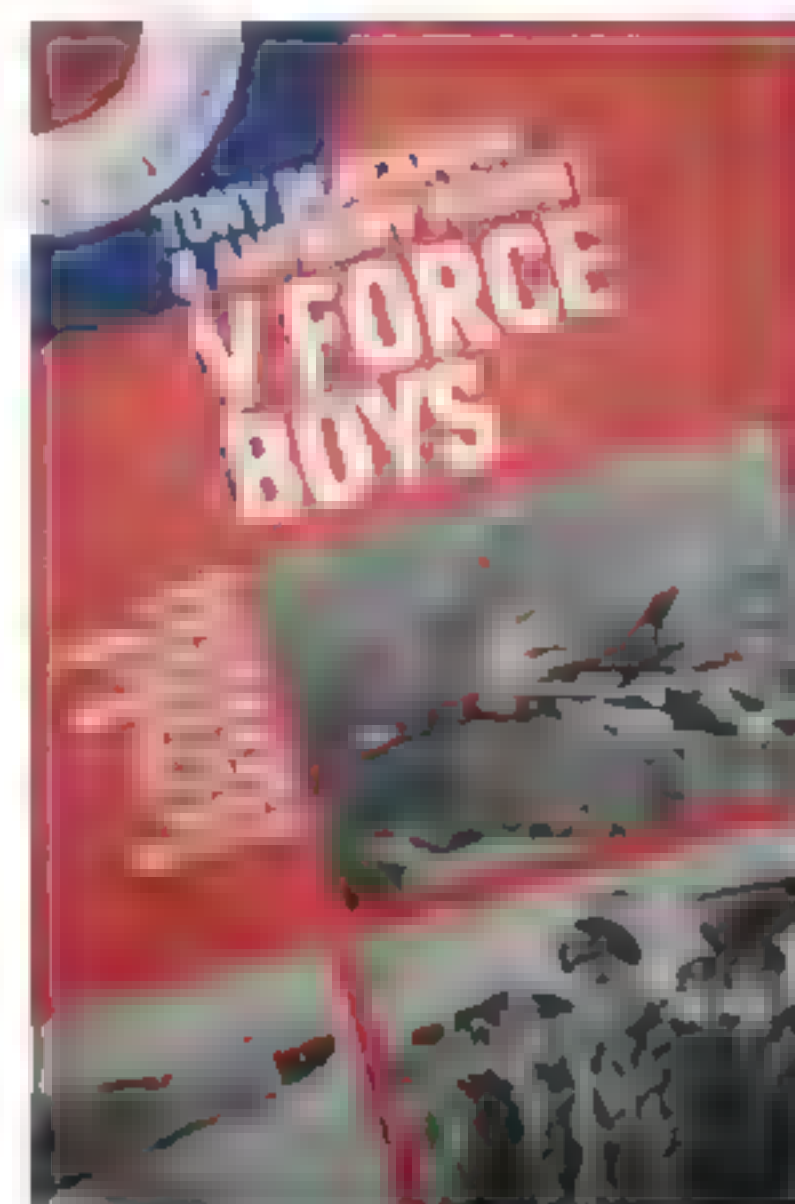
Author: Tony Blackman & Anthony Wright

Publisher: Grub Street (grubstreet.co.uk)

ISBN: 978-1-91166-736-0

Paperback: 208 pages

RRP: £14.99



Flight Lieutenant Thomas 'Tommy' Rose DFC

By Sarah Chambers (in conjunction with Peter Amos)

In the early years of British aviation, there is arguably no figure more accomplished than Flight Lieutenant Thomas 'Tommy' Rose, DFC: fighter ace, record-breaker and chief test pilot

A character whose incredible flying feats left him considered one of the finest airmen of his generation, the list of Tommy's achievements is almost endless, from amazing onlookers as a barnstorming stunt pilot to becoming an ace with 11 victories in World War One. By the time of his retirement in the 1940s, Tommy had amassed well over 11,200 flying hours, before the trailblazer became forgotten. Hopefully, this

biography will help bring Tommy Rose's story and remarkable career back into the public consciousness.

The book is the result of decades of research by the airman's great-niece, Sarah Chambers, who collated documents and interviewed veterans, enabling her to piece together the complete story of Tommy's life. Spread over 18 chapters, her distinctive narrative enables the reader to grasp a clear picture of the ace's daring adventures.

If there is one fly in the

ointment, it is the reproduction of a number of the photographs, which are too small (and often too soft) to reveal much detail. Otherwise, this is a compelling page-turner exploring one of the best British pilots in history.

Reviewed by Tom Baker

Author: Sarah Chambers (with Peter Amos)

Publisher: Pen & Sword (pen-and-sword.co.uk)

ISBN: 978-1-52678-382-0

Hardback: 336 Pages

RRP: £25



Relive history – or redefine it

The Great War: Western Front

For those seeking a relaxing experience, this is not for you. Developers Petroglyph Games and Frontier Foundry, in association with the Imperial War Museum, have delivered perhaps the most authentic portrayal of World War One's carnage to date.

Although many titles, both blockbuster and indie, have tried to encapsulate that conflict's horrors, few have been successful – the difficult subject matter and stagnant tactics proving awkward to translate into satisfying gameplay. However, as a real-time strategy game, with an focus on authenticity, this new release shines in its ability to immerse the player in the 'war to end all wars.'

Players choose between the Entente or the Central Powers and are given



two key roles. The first puts the player into the boots of the theatre commander, controlling strategy via disseminating resources or deploying regiments.

The second requires the player assume field command in dynamic, real-time struggles. Heat-of-the-moment tactical decisions are a prerequisite, but winning just one battle will feel exhausting. Each

engagement has a cost in time and material, and will often make even the victor feel as if all is for naught.

This game may be a challenging entry for the casual gamer, as it has intricate mechanics to master. However, those willing to invest their time will find a well-polished strategy game and an immersive experience.

Reviewed by Tom Baker

Developer: Petroglyph Games

Publisher: Frontier Foundry

Platform: Windows

RRP: £29.99

PEGI rating: 16+

Available via Steam®. Check system requirements before purchase.



An early M29 Weasel being put through its paces US ARMY

ADAPTABLE ANIMAL

When British brain met American automotive brawn, the result was a light vehicle adept in multiple roles. **Michael E Haskew** profiles the M29 Weasel

Geoffrey Pyke was eccentric, anti-social, gawky and often irritating. He was, nevertheless, brilliant. But, although the missions he foresaw never materialised, his proposed vehicle did: the M29 Weasel is an unsung development that saw action in multiple theatres and proved its worth in a variety of roles.

With World War Two well under way, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Combined Operations Command wanted Pyke to participate in the development of special, perhaps war-winning projects. This possibly due to his Spanish Civil War work, when Pyke fundraised for the provision of an ambulance sidecar (of his own design) for motorcycles. He also facilitated the import of vehicles, ploughs and tools – innovating his way past crippling shortages of key items such as bandages.

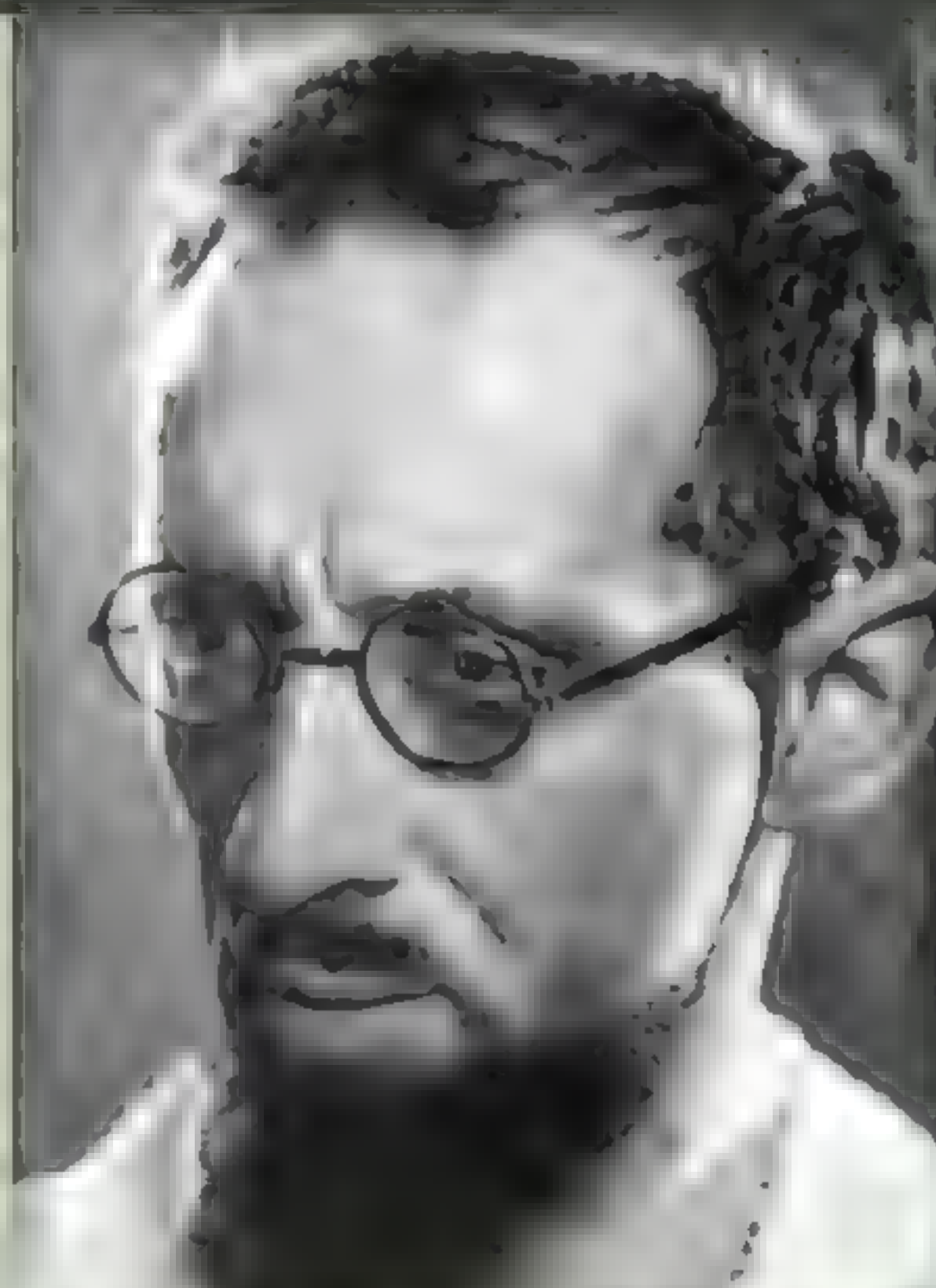
Among the schemes Pyke hatched were Operation Habakkuk, an immense 2,000ft aircraft carrier made of Pykrete – a robust, slow-melting mixture of ice and wood pulp. He also proposed the ‘Uphill’ project, intended to transport water long distances, and the

BACK-ROOM ECCENTRIC

Geoffrey Pyke was born on November 9, 1893; the son of a Jewish lawyer who died when he was five. Geoffrey’s mother insisted he maintain his faith until he was 13, after which he became an atheist.

The man best known for Habakkuk, and the material developed to create it, was an interesting figure. He paid little attention to grooming, wore the same stained suit for days, and exhibited jealousy and suspicion in equal measure. Yet, embedded in the personality that took little interest in what others seemed to think, was the spark of genius.

Educated at Wellington College before studying law at Pembroke College, Cambridge, Pyke abandoned his studies to become a war correspondent. This was his claim to fame, as he entered Germany on a false passport in 1914 but was soon interned. After a difficult imprisonment he escaped alongside Edward Falk; accounts of the break became headline news.



British innovator Geoffrey Pyke ALAMY

Between the wars, Pyke completed a PhD in chemistry, supported efforts against antisemitism in Germany and set up the Voluntary Industrial Aid for Spain organisation during the civil war. In 1939, he led a covert survey of the German people, gleaning they were largely opposed to war, seeking to use this information

to deter Hitler. War was declared before he was ready.

Pyke’s military ideas ranged from the bizarre to the ridiculous. For example, his strategies for targeting the Romanian oilfields included: using dogs to howl like wolves and cause the guards to flee; providing alcohol to reduce their efficiency (sensible, until it was realised his delivery method was to use dogs); and distracting security teams with women. These, he hoped, would be used in conjunction with the setting of fires, providing the raiders cover by disguising them as firemen.

Nevertheless, there were often viable kernels within his ideas, as his suggestions for a raiding force and accompanying vehicle prove. In fact, the Weasel outlived the brain responsible for its creation, as Pyke died by his own hand in February 1948. His obituary in *The Times* began: “The death of Geoffrey Pyke removes one of the most original if unrecognised figures of the present century.”

concept of an international raiding force tackling the Reich’s toughest targets.

Oil and water

While Habakkuk and Uphill plans were shelved, the envisioned commando-type

unit led to the formation of the Canadian-American 1st Special Service Force – the ‘Devil’s Brigade’ – which compiled an impressive record in the Aleutians and Italy. Led by Colonel (later Major General) Robert

Frederick, the force earned lasting fame with its nocturnal raids on German outposts at Anzio, leaving sentries with slit throats; and in its heroic seizure of Monte la Difensa, scaling the heights and surprising the Germans.



The Weasel was a highly capable off-road vehicle, and dealt with snow and mud with relative ease THE TANK MUSEUM



An M29C enters the water in the Netherlands THE TANK MUSEUM

Another of Pyke's ideas was conceived for an operation that never took place. Operation Plough was intended to wreak havoc, and he envisioned attacks on the Ploesti oilfields in Romania or the heavy water facilities in Norway. Pyke believed his inter-allied commando unit might damage or destroy these, but he also understood that areas of northern Europe and the Carpathians were blanketed with snow for much of the year. He proposed a vehicle that would provide swift, efficient transport. In Pyke's mind, the new snow machine would exert less ground pressure than a soldier's foot and whisk

combatants across the wintry landscape to execute their clandestine missions.

The Weasel performed capably – but not as Pyke predicted. In spring 1942, he joined other military and civilian representatives in the United States to gain support. Pyke did not get along well with the Americans and they did not trust the boorish Brit, attempting to exclude him from further participation – they

were particularly incensed by Pyke's suggestion that the USSR should be involved in the M29's development. So, due both to Pyke's influence and in spite of it, the Weasel gained traction.

The contract went to Studebaker, an automotive manufacturer headquartered in South Bend, Indiana. The ambitious development timeline was challenging, and design efforts were undertaken in early 1942.

“Pyke's new snow machine would exert less pressure than a soldier's foot and whisk combatants across the wintry landscape”

Power champion

The prototype T15 made its debut later that year. However, this was only achieved after Pyke's interference was overcome. He insisted the propulsion system should operate with a pair of Archimedes screws rather than tracks, and the idea was wholly unsatisfactory. Dr Vannevar Bush, who chaired the American National Defense Research Committee, groaned that Pyke was “short on physics – especially short on engineering judgment...”

The T15, officially Cargo Carrier, Light, T15/M28, was required to meet several specifications. Minimum speed

A grainy photograph of the prototype vehicle that would later become the Weasel, complete with Pyke's Archimedes screws. US ARMY



Some M29s were fitted with mounts for heavy weapons, such as this M20 recoilless rifle. US ARMY



was to be 20mph, range 250 miles, payload 4,000lbs – all while generating under one pound per square inch of ground pressure. It had to be transportable in the modified bomb bay of the Lancaster, and operate in swamp or marsh, on hard or muddy roads and, of course, in deep snow.

Its capacity included a two-man crew, with the engine placed to the rear and 15in Kégresse tracks (developed by B F Goodrich and Firestone) that used a canvas and rubber continuous belt rather than interlocking metal links. Two sprung bogeys were placed each side.

The powerplant chosen was the Studebaker Champion. Introduced in 1938, this was already in production and the flathead, six-cylinder engine weighed only 455lb (including gearbox) but generated 70hp, and had a good compression ratio of 6.25:1. The engine was packaged with a single-plate transmission with a controlled differential and two-speed driving axle. Parts were readily available for maintenance – another advantage.

The first 2,103 vehicles were built to the T15 configuration, which underwent testing in the dunes along Lake Michigan in summer 1942 after only four months of design work. Sites in the Canadian Rockies provided testing grounds in snow-covered terrain. For all the expectations, the T15/M28's shortcomings were revealed: it could muster only 15mph, and its traverse of an incline was limited to 15° rather than the specified 20°. Still, it was more efficient than ski troops swooshing across the landscape. Airdrop techniques were refined after the first attempt, from a C-54 Skymaster, resulted in the Weasel overturning.

Back to the drawing board

The engineers took their lessons to heart. The engine was moved to the front, while the drive wheel and idler exchanged positions front to rear. With the weight



The British 79th Armoured Division experimented with Weasels for mine clearance
THE TANK MUSEUM



Brothers in battle preserved at The Tank Museum, Bovington: A 79th Armoured Division Weasel inside an LVT IV of the same division. Both facilitated success in the Walcheren landings ROD W

shifted forward, the rear-wheel drive configuration was complemented with 20in tracks and revised bogeys to reduce the likelihood of throwing a track.

The result was a startling improvement in climbing capability to 60°. At 3,725lb, the new M29A mounted a psi of just 1.69 with the 20in tracks, again the pressure well below that of a human foot. The wide track became standard, and a conversion kit for earlier models was issued from January 1945.

The M29A, first designated the T24, was 5ft 10in tall, 10½ft long, and along with the

crew its payload in equipment, ammunition or other supplies was 1,200lb. Without cargo, two seats could be installed to the rear. The Weasel sported a windshield similar to the ubiquitous Jeep, and its top speed improved to 33mph. The first 1,002 were completed with an explosive charge between the rear deck and engine – since the vehicle was still secret, it was to be destroyed if capture seemed likely. The Studebaker production run of the M29A was 4,476 in total – including 523 in 1943 and 2,951 the following year.

The M29 was intended for amphibious ops. However,

while it would float, it was unstable with only a couple of inches of freeboard. The tracks were its sole onboard propulsion, generating an abysmal 1.8mph in water. Nevertheless, it was highly capable in swamp, marsh and mud. The M29C variant was introduced for amphibious situations; its bow section was rounded and a retractable trim vane was installed. Buoyancy tanks were extended forward and aft, and a small capstan was installed forward for towing or vehicle recovery and powered by the engine. As a result, the M29C was 6ft longer than the M29A but

managed a healthier 4mph in water; 10,647 were built from 1944 to war's end.

Multi-role combatant

The Weasel was sometimes armed with machine guns, but could carry heavier weapons, including a centre-mounted 75mm M20 recoilless rifle on some M29As with the same weapon mounted to the rear in some M29Bs. Some M29Cs were occasionally armed with the M20 or a 37mm M3 gun on a central mount.

Experiments were carried out with a mine flail or with centipede rollers to detonate the Schü-mine 42 – a cheap, mass-produced anti-personnel device housed in a wooden box, making it particularly difficult to detect. Neither counter entered production. They were developed by the British 79th Armoured Division, specialists of armoured/mechanised solutions to battlefield problems, while in Belgium.

Primarily a cargo carrier, the Weasel was used as an ambulance, sometimes equipped with radio and communications apparatus and served as a command-and-control vehicle. Of course, it had been developed for special operations, so its first wartime deployment was with the 1st Special Service Force and the 13th Canadian Infantry Brigade during Operation Cottage, the landings on the Aleutian island of Kiska in August 1943. The Japanese had evacuated the island and the landings were unopposed, but through the remainder of the war the Weasel was active in the European and Pacific theatres.

However, at times, breakdowns occurred during deployments that covered considerable distances. Weasels that went ashore on D-Day were utilised extensively in Normandy, and the unit history of the US 87th Chemical Mortar Battalion records a blistering assessment of the

vehicle's performance. On D-Day+69, near La Ferté-Macé, its commander advised: "All companies are having a great deal of trouble with the M29 on long movements such as the ones Companies 'C' and 'D' have made.

"The Cargo Carriers have been overheating and the water has completely boiled out of the radiators. These vehicles were made to operate in arctic temperatures... Plates are coming off the tracks and the cables that hold the tracks together break on long movements. All in all, the efficiency and mobility of this battalion is greatly reduced by

our being required to operate with such a vehicle, not only because it is inefficient but because it was never intended to operate in this climate or on hard paved roads."

Water Weasels

Despite this indictment, Weasels were deployed amid varied climates. One of its best performances was turned in during the 1944 seizure of Walcheren in the Scheldt estuary. Antwerp and its port were in British hands, but the Germans had fortified the Scheldt approaches, sealing it off from the North Sea, 60 miles distant. To make the

"Since the vehicle was still secret, it was to be destroyed if capture seemed likely"

British M29Cs and LVT IVs come ashore during the landings on Walcheren
OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH



At least one M29C was outfitted with the Wasp flamethrower THE TANK MUSEUM



The Weasel went on to serve in a variety of roles, such as this USMC example kitted out for cable-laying, shown in Korea, November 1950
US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE



Australian Women's Army Service inside one of the two M29s received by the Australian Army AWM



deep-water port accessible, the estuary had to be cleared.

Moreover, the bombing of the coast at Westkapelle caused widespread flooding on Walcheren. The fast-flowing breaches were deemed too rough for the Weasel, which British records also suggest had limited sea-keeping qualities. It was noted that its freeboard was poor and that waves more than 8in high should be avoided, as should the wash from passing vessels.

Lieutenant-Colonel Cecil Farndale Phillips, commander of 47 Commando, Royal Marines, watched the preparations for the Operation Infatuate landings: "Midnight, October 31, saw the force,

which was about to embark on a precarious operation, in Ostende; here was suffused lighting by which one could discern dim shapes moving about from craft to craft and from craft to jetty – the forms of all manner of LVT, Weasels, landing craft and all the pedimenta connected with a large amphibious operation."

Once ashore, the little amphibian proved versatile, with mud and rocks overcome with relative ease. Only other amphibious vehicles such as the DUKW, Terrapin and particularly the tracked LVT Buffalo could traverse such ground without bogging down.

Canadian troops were heavily involved in the clearing of the

Scheldt and, as they so often had to fight in deliberately flooded terrain, also deployed the Weasel. In wintry conditions, the Canadians dubbed them 'Snow Jeeps' and the British also employed M29s during Operation Veritable, the Rhine crossing.

In spring 1945, the Weasel was used to ford small streams, haul supplies over soft terrain and evacuate the wounded. During one episode, the British 153rd Brigade, 51st Division, was clearing the area between the Reichswald, and the Canadian troops its left flanks near the eastern banks of the Maas. Major Martin Lindsay's 1st Gordon Highlanders encountered high-impassable

roadways with deep muddy ruts. He was compelled to leave the battalion vehicles behind, with one exception: a single M29 transporting 500 tins of self-heating soup. The battalion history noted that Lindsay's decision was "a notable example of good housekeeping in the field".

Island hopper to ice queen

The British also adapted the vehicle for laying field lines for communications and at least one was armed with a Wasp flamethrower. In this, the fuel tank occupied the cargo or passenger area, the gunner was seated atop it, and the nozzle of the projector

M29 WEASEL VS CONTEMPORARY LOAD CARRIERS

	M29A WEASEL	UNIVERSAL CARRIER	LOYD CARRIER	RAUPENSCHLEPPER OST	LORRAINE 37L
In service:	1942-1958 (US)	1940-60s**	1939-60s	1942-45	1939-45
Country:	United States	Britain	Britain	Germany	France
Length:	10ft 6in (3.2m)	12ft (3.65m)	13ft 11in (4.25m)	14ft 6in (4.2m)	13ft 9in (4.2m)
Weight:	1.69 tonnes	3.75 tonnes	4.5 tonnes	3 tonnes	5.25 tonnes
Crew:	1	3	1	2	2
Powerplant:	6-cyl 6-170 Champion, 70 hp	Ford V8, 85hp	Ford V8, 85hp	Steyr v8, 85ph, or 4-cly Deutz, 66hp	6-cly Delahaye Type 135, 70 hp
Max. speed:	36mph (58kph)	30mph (48kph)	30mph (48kph)	19mph (30kph)	22mph (35kph)
Max range:	165mi (265km)	150mi (250km)	140mi (230km)	190mi (300km)	85mi (137km)
Capacity*:	1,200lb (544kg) or 3 soldiers	1,100lb (500kg)	1,500lb (680kg) or 8 soldiers	3,300lb (1,500kg)	1,520lb (690kg)
Main armament:	Occasionally mounted .30- or .50-calibre machine guns, recoilless rifles, light mortars or a 37mm M6 gun	1x Bren gun or Boys rifle, occasionally 1 x Vickers or .50-calibre machine gun or mortar	N/A	90 fitted with 1x7.5cm PaK 40 gun	N/A
Armour (at thickest):	N/A	10mm	7mm	N/A	12mm
No. built:	15,892 (all variants)	113,000	22,000	23,000	630

*Excluding towing. **Initial Bren and Scout variants had been in use since the early 1930s.

spewed its fiery stream directly over the driver's head.

The US Marine Corps received M29s in large numbers and found them invaluable at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. In February 1945, the Marines hit the beaches at Iwo Jima and found the black volcanic sand difficult to negotiate. The M29 proved adept at this, delivering supplies, ammunition and evacuating the wounded in more than a month of fighting. It rendered similar valuable service on Okinawa, just 400 miles from Japan's home islands, during an arduous campaign that lasted more than 80 days.

Post-war, the French utilised Weasels (designated Crabes) in Indochina, its 1st Foreign Cavalry Regiment deploying at least 66 against Viet Minh insurgents in the delta of the great Mekong from 1947 with another regiment deploying up to 30 in roughly the same period. Losses were initially heavy as the M29s were sent forward without infantry support amid thick jungle and swampy terrain. Later, they were heavily armed with machine guns, recoilless rifles and mortars.

The US military sold M29s on in the post-war era and retained it for a while itself.



Kiwi mountaineer and explorer Edmund Hillary used the Weasel on his Antarctic expedition THE EVENING POST (NZ)

They served during the Korean War, others were utilised in cold weather Arctic manoeuvres and in civilian rescue operations, and 25 were loaned by the US military for use in the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley, Idaho. More were employed during scientific exploration of Antarctica with hardtop covers installed to provide some protection from the elements.

The latter is what was demanded of the Weasels used by Australia and New Zealand. Two narrow-track examples were acquired by the Australian Army for testing in 1945, seeing the advantages of such a vehicle in the sodden jungles in which it was fighting. An order did not follow, but it is unclear whether that was because they found the M29

A M29C Weasel towing skiers on Mount Kosciuszko, Australia, in much the same way that the vehicle supported various military and explorative functions NEW SOUTH WALES STATE ARCHIVES



unsatisfactory or because the war was at its end.

They were withdrawn in 1946 and ended up with the New South Wales government for use on the Australian mainland's tallest mountain, Kosciuszko, and at other snowbound sites into the 1960s, alongside other purchased examples. Two others, painted red and modified, supported the 1962 Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition and its 1,850-mile Vostok traverse across largely uncharted terrain. Weasels supported Australia's Antarctic efforts until the 1980s.

Fellow antipodean Sir Edmund Hillary employed Weasels on his South Pole Expedition, New Zealand's element of the 1957-58 Commonwealth Trans-

Antarctic Expedition, while the elite mountain troops of the French Army fielded them until 1970 after which some were passed to the French Dumont d'Urville Antarctic station and used into the 1990s. Another long-serving operator was Norway, apt given the M29's origins. These supported Anglo-Norwegian defence efforts throughout much of the Cold War.

The Weasel is still undoubtedly used in various capacities, but it is today a favourite among enthusiasts with several restored in Britain and the United States. It remains an innovative vehicle with a remarkable service record and longevity – particularly when one considers that the mission for which it was conceived never took place. **BW**



Two ANARE M29s and a ski-equipped Auster in Antarctica STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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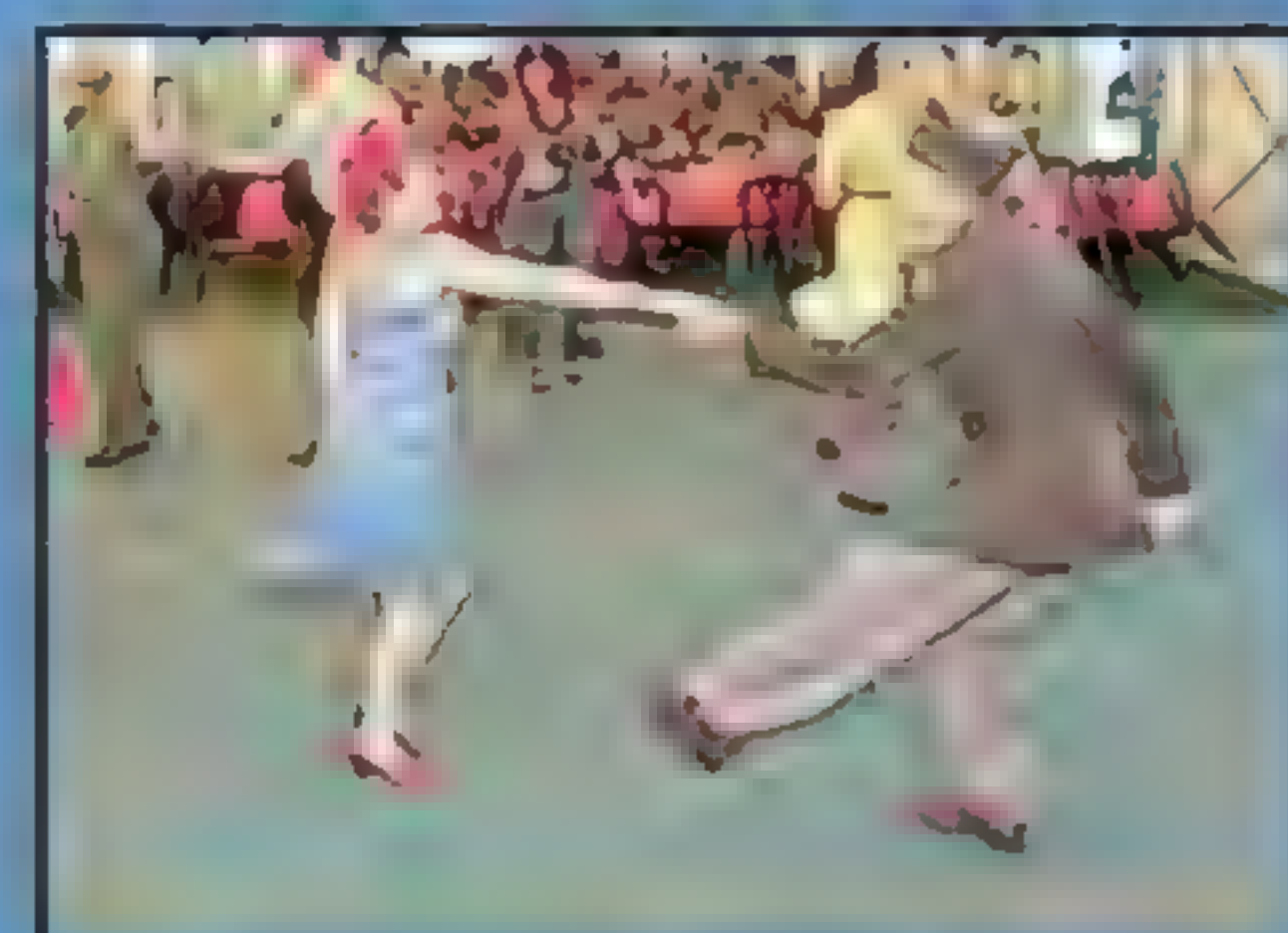
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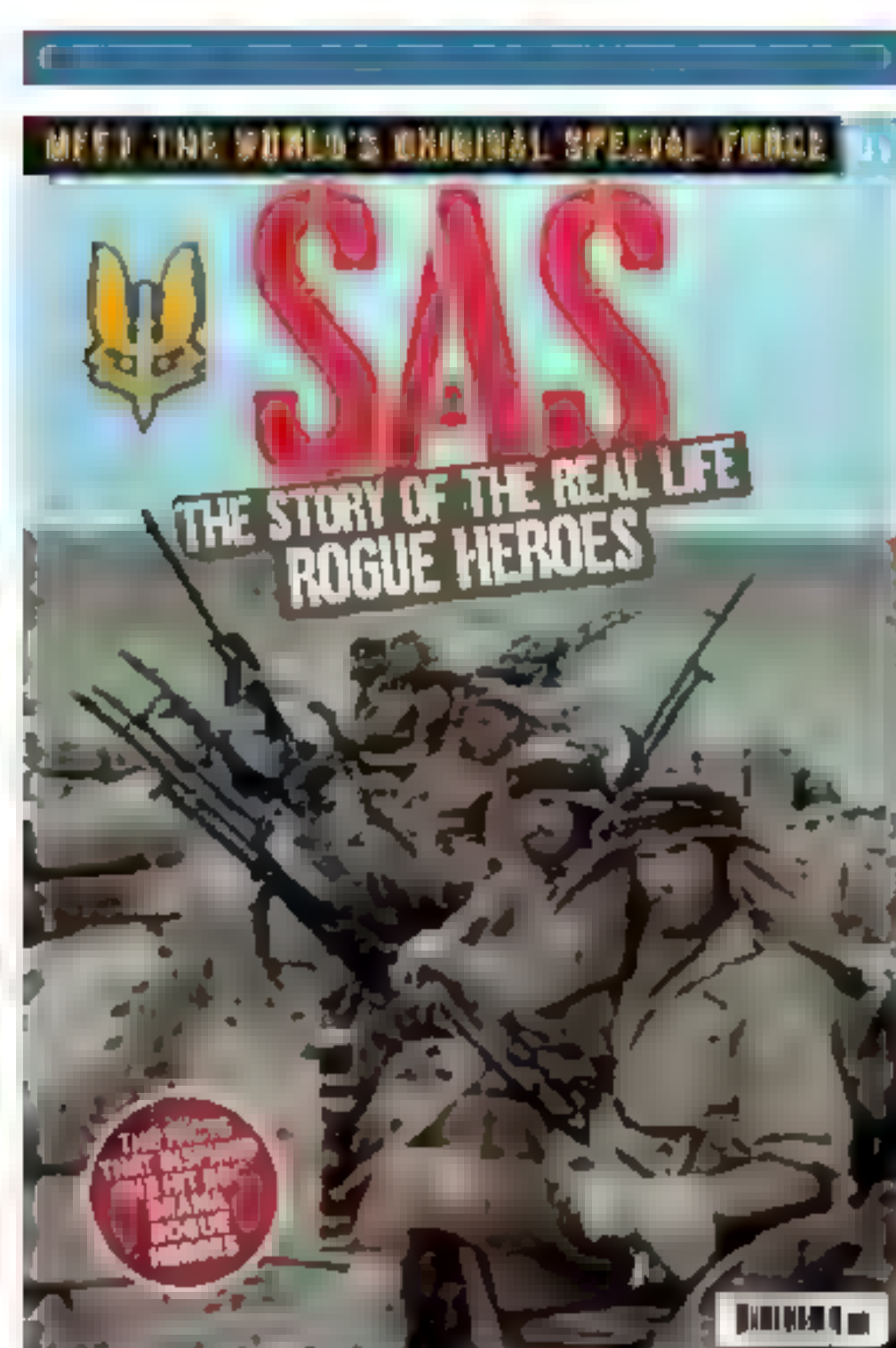


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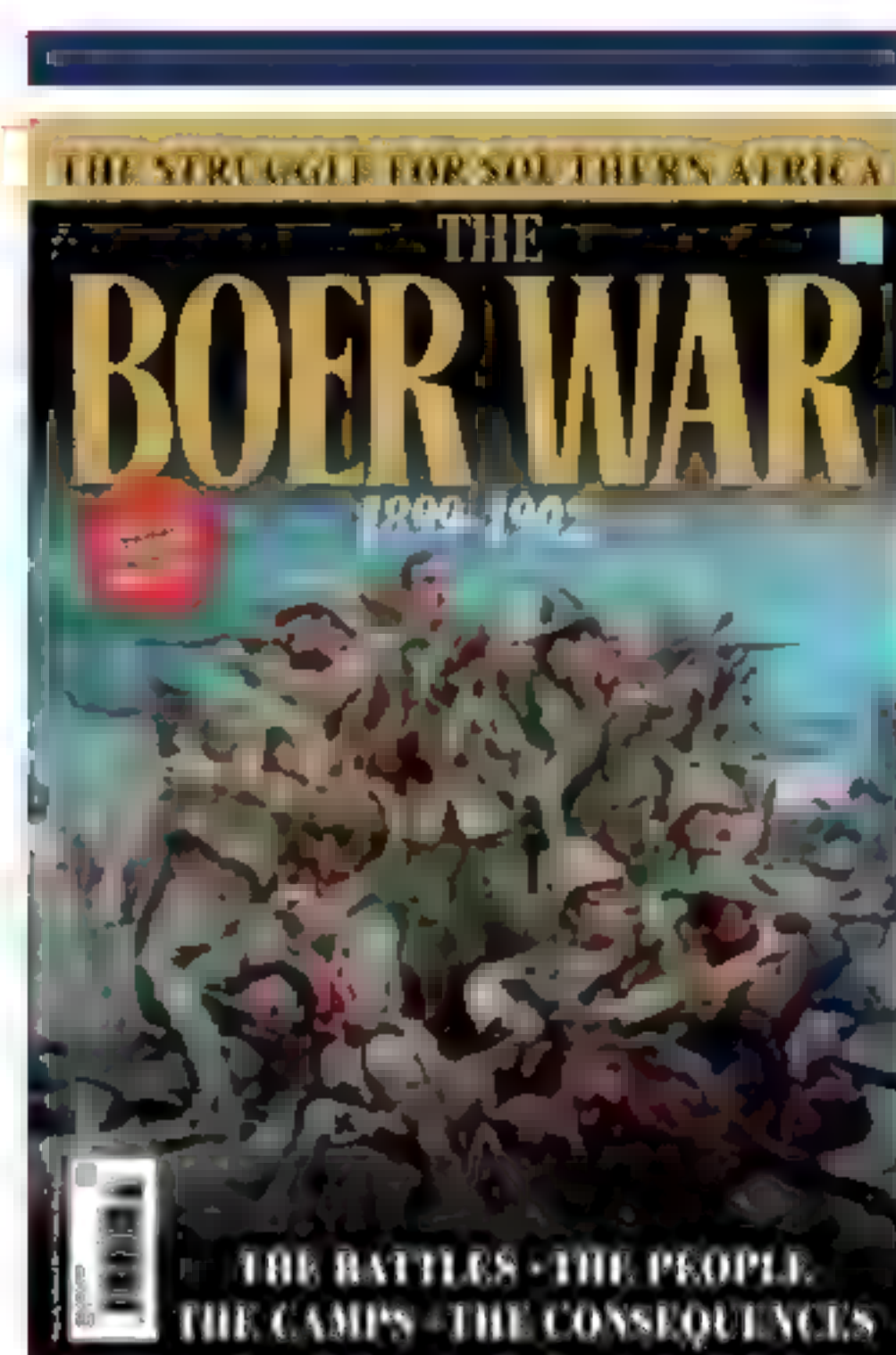
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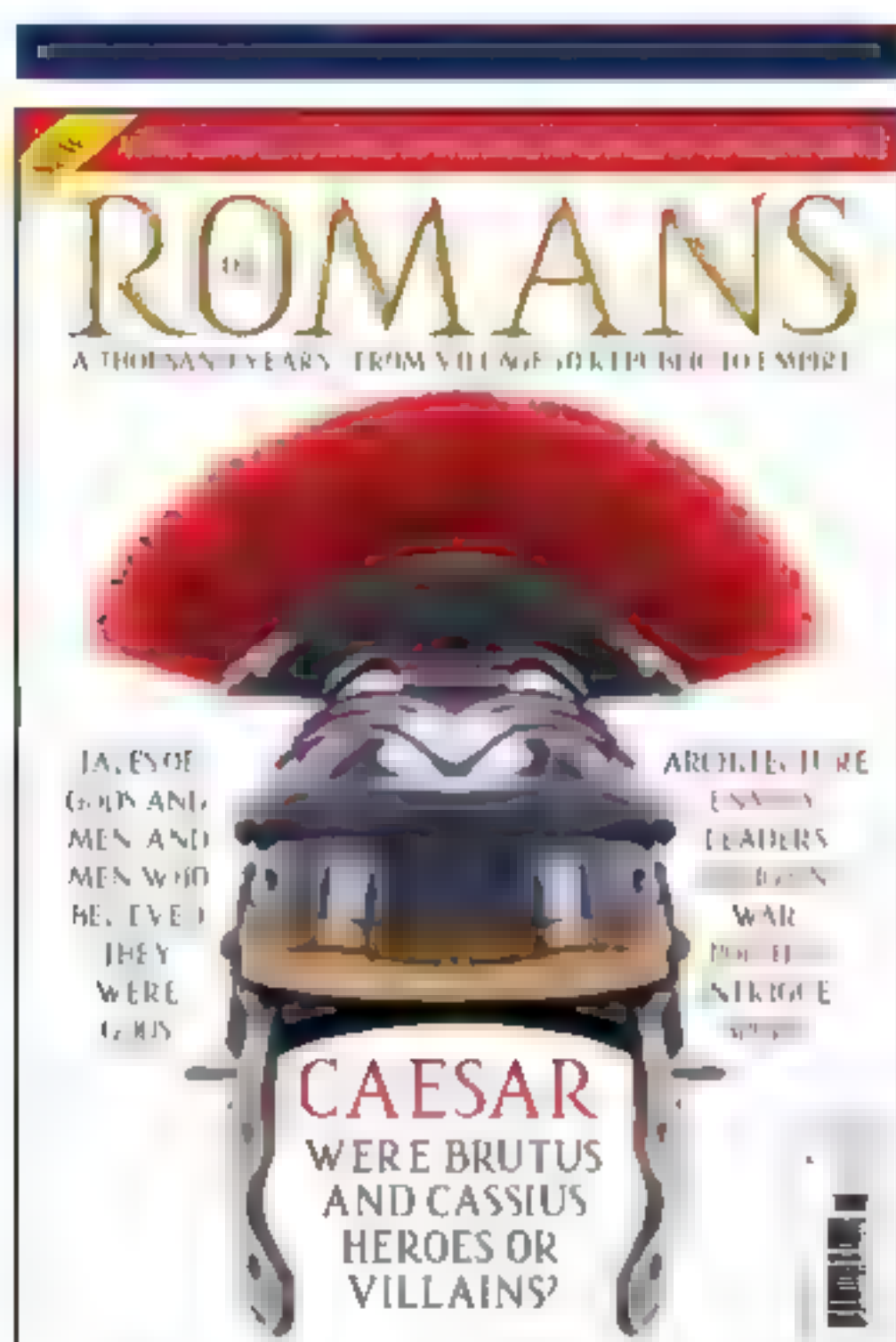
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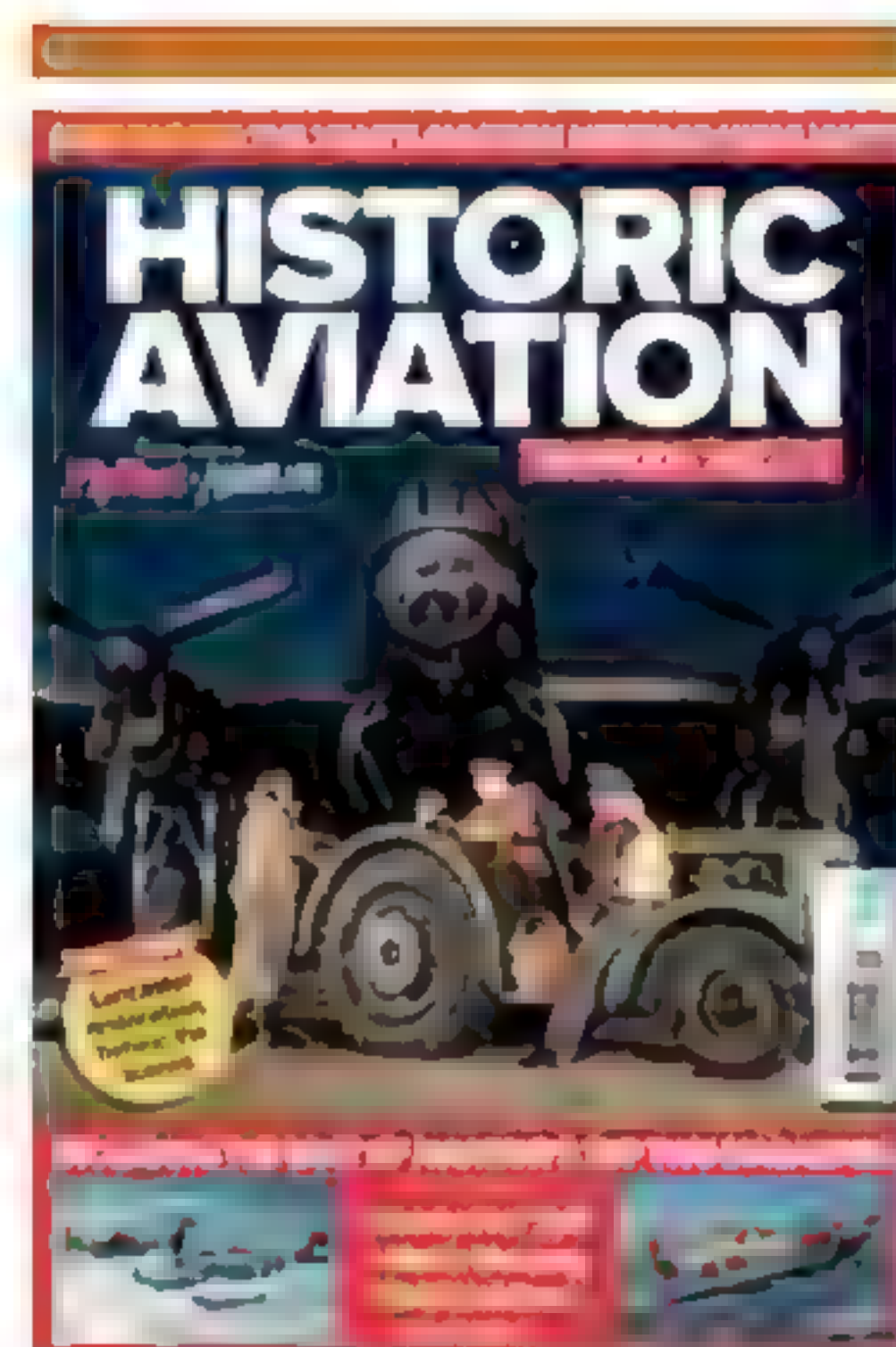
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CHINA CRISIS

A respected British industry faced serious challenges during World War Two, and the knock-on effect was that it became difficult to put food on the table – literally

By Austin J Ruddy

Internationally renowned as one of Britain's greatest industries, pottery manufacturing endured a particularly tough time during World War Two. In theory, the industry should have been one of the least affected, as its base commodity – clay – was cheap, plentiful, did not have to be imported and required little adaption. However, other pressures led to government intervention, restrictions and even the compulsory closure of firms.

Back in 1939, things were not as rosy as they seemed for the pottery industry in Britain. Despite its fine reputation and

“Only 66.67% of pottery could be sold through British shops, the rest having to go abroad to raise desperately needed export incomes”

80,000 skilled workers, equipment was antiquated, the workforce suffered from work-related health issues and there were periods of high unemployment. The onset of war did little to help. The first impact came in June 1940 with the Board of Trade's Limitation of Supplies Order, which decreed that only 66.67% of pottery could be sold through British shops, the rest having to go abroad to raise desperately needed export income.

On the face of it, this seemed to work. By 1941, exports of British china had risen to £1 million (£68 million today), compared to £425,000 (£27 million) in 1938, bringing in much-needed hard cash. However, that was just the start. By June 1941, domestic sales had been further reduced to 40%, leading to severe shortages of essential crockery.

This decorated china teapot was made by AG Richardson & Co of Staffordshire for its Crown Ducal range. As written on one side, it was made for mail order in Christmas 1939. Decorated with flags, it bears the slogans 'Liberty and Freedom' and 'War Against Hitlerism' and states "This souvenir teapot was made for Dyson & Horsfall of Preston to replace aluminium stocks taken over for Allied armaments, 1939." These still surface occasionally, so must have been a popular wartime present. This example is heavily tea-stained – one wonders how many cups it served throughout the war! Fairly rare, £75



ALL IMAGES VIA THE AUTHOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED



LEFT: Fancier pottery products were made to boost morale. This unsigned ceramic British bulldog, circa 1940-41, exudes 'Blitz Spirit'. Standing 6in tall, the defiant canine sits sentry with a steel helmet bearing the pugnacious wording 'Hitler's Terror'. Its dogged character adds to its appeal. Sought after, £80

RIGHT: The Bovey Pottery of Devon produced a series of 16 novelty figurines, from a fireman and ARP warden to a land girl and nurse, created by Fenton Wyness and Gwynneth Holt. Rarer examples can fetch hundreds of pounds, but this 7in caricature of Churchill, 'The Boss', was very popular and can be found for around £75

BELOW: Churchill was the focus of much decorative pottery, from cups to ash trays. This souvenir plate features a famous photograph of the Prime Minister taken by photographer Cecil Beaton. Entitled 'The Fighting Premier', it was made by AG Richardson and fetches around £30

electrical insulators to earthenware storage jars for the services. The Board of Trade also made it clear that each nucleus of manufacturers was expected to release a third of its workforce, with younger workers withdrawn into the military and replaced by older workers. The contraction of the workforce continued for years, the lowest period being in June 1944, when the labour force totalled 54% of the pre-war figure.

Centralisation and contraction

Further pressures, including the sheer amount of coal and gas required to manufacture china, plus the demand for workers at new war factories in Staffordshire, made production unsustainable. The government's answer was a concentration of industry, whereby production was centralised in a reduced number of factories to free up labour, as well as save energy and materials. Firms were reclassified as being nucleus, concentrated or simply closed down.

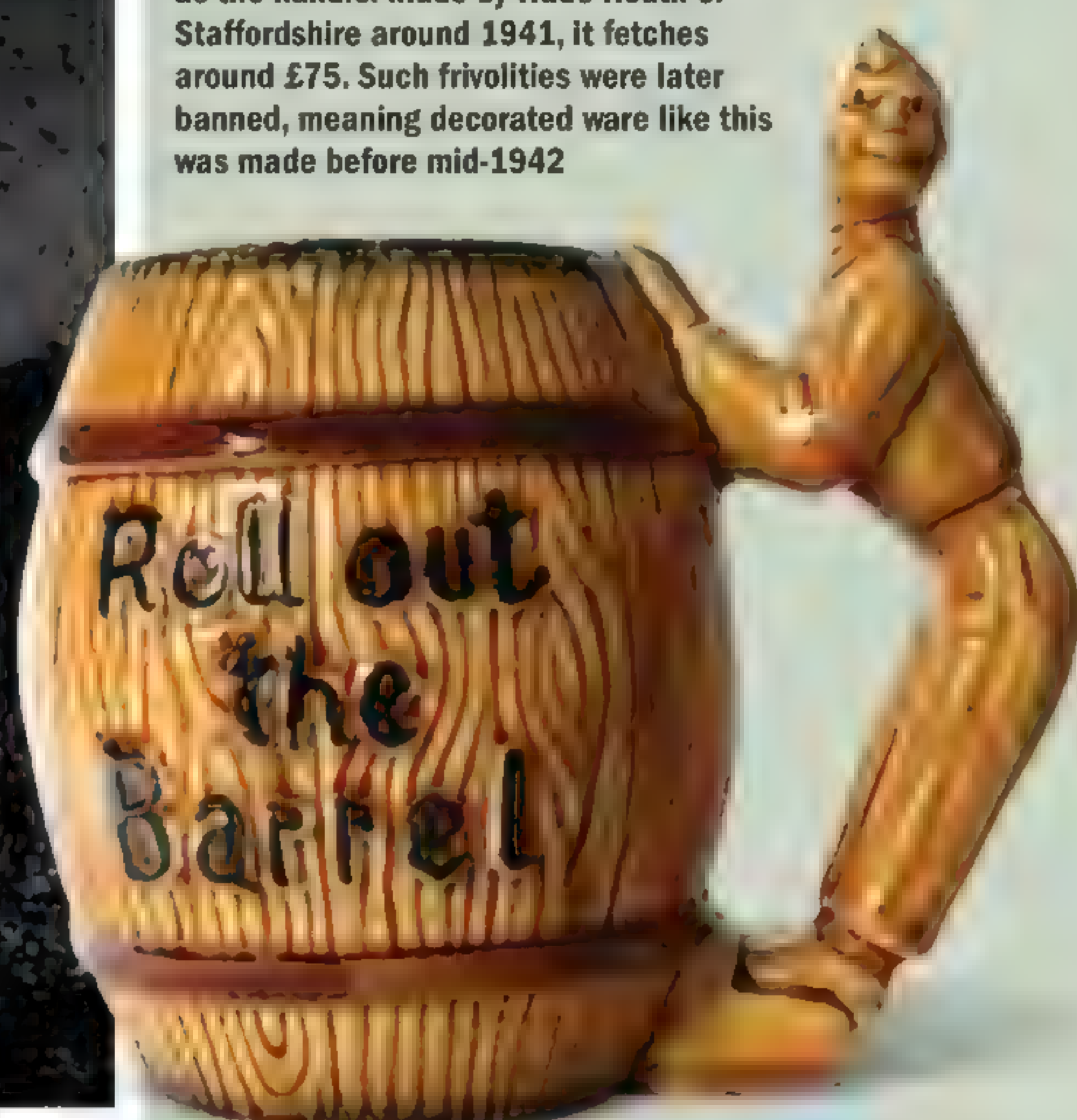
The process was initiated in July 1941, with 84 establishments authorised as nucleus status, while a staggering 105 were forced to close. This released 2,400,000ft² of factory space for the war effort, to produce everything from ceramic



It should be remembered that for at least the first half of the war, most tableware used in the home would be existing pre-war china. However, due to its fragility, breakages became increasingly difficult and costly to replace. It was not unknown for people to drink out of jam jars, and the domestic shortage was exacerbated by rising communal eating in service and factory canteens. These massively increased demand for crockery, so much so, that by early 1942, supplies were short by 100 million pieces a year.

To try and counteract this, the Board reluctantly agreed to alter the production ratio and decreed

This lighthearted 'Roll Out the Barrel' tankard, named after the popular song, features a squaddie as the handle. Made by Wade Heath of Staffordshire around 1941, it fetches around £75. Such frivolities were later banned, meaning decorated ware like this was made before mid-1942



Britain's potteries and kilns demanded vast amounts of fuel, a precious commodity that was in high demand TOPFOTO



a 40% cut to exports by August 1942. Only colour and decorated ware could be exported to the Americas and Canada, as it brought in hard currency. However, these items required additional production hours and greater amounts of energy for multiple firings.

To ease shortages and encourage producers to make plainer ware, the Board relaxed restrictions for essential items, such as cups, teapots and plates, provided they were made of undecorated earthenware or plain china. However, companies continued to produce more expensive and decorated products, as that's where the money was!

Scaling down

The Board felt a tougher line was needed. By June 1942, they introduced Order No.1038/1039, banning the sale of decorated pottery to the home market. This also limited the type of items that could be made, along with quantities, supply and price.

BELOW: By the mid-war years, there was a particular shortage of cups. The government placed large orders of utility vessels for civilian and military canteens. As per regulations, this beaker bears the production code 'C', the printed markings of its maker, Swinnertons Ltd, plus the 1945 production date and 'GR VI' to show it was government property. Cheap, disposable and unloved, it's ironic that utility ware has now become some of the rarest of 1940s pottery, £40



ABOVE: A more elaborate souvenir was this two-handled loving cup made by the Royal Victoria Pottery. It features Churchill as one handle and US President Franklin D Roosevelt as the other, probably to commemorate the signing of the Atlantic Charter or Lend-Lease. Rare, £100

RIGHT: The industry also produced practical items, such as this decorated ashtray by the Shelley Pottery of Staffordshire. Likely made in 1941-1942 for civil defence workers, it is rare, £90



Pottery was to be marked under the glaze with the letters A, B or C, indicating maximum retail prices. No other markings were allowed except for the manufacturer's name and firms were divided up into the production of wares according to these letters. The scheme was revised in May 1945 with the Domestic Pottery (Manufacture and Supply) Order No.498, with additional letter groups BY, CY and CZ, the last two codes affecting the production and pricing of jugs and pudding bowls. Now sometimes dubbed 'utility ware', these items were to be made without decoration and with a white or light ivory glaze, except for stone or earthenware, for which a brown or colourless glaze was permitted.

Although it was hoped that its plain appearance would dissuade people from buying crockery unless they really needed it, the main aim for standardisation – cutting out unnecessary articles and decoration – was to bring economies in output. However, it was not as simple as that. By autumn 1942, the workforce was still under the permitted figures of concentration. A new Essential Work Order attempted to move labour to where it was needed within the industry, such as transferring redundant crockery decorators to the initial clay processing. However, each stage of production was a

specialised skill. Similarly, mould-makers were scarce and creating moulds for new designs would take time. Meanwhile, the older workforce objected because they would not earn as much with the simplified designs. Importantly, they were in a position of power because they were unionised, they were few in number and they had specialised skills.

It was also soon found that, despite the theory of standardisation, one size did not fit all in practice. Commercial businesses, the military and even the government had varying needs. For example, cafes had two sizes of cup for 1d and 2d cups of tea, while the services had pint mugs. Smaller families also needed smaller basins to avoid food wastage.

The cup crisis

A further revision, Order 2210, came in January 1943. Based on capacity, a committee of manufacturers advised on the suitability of designs and sizes. They also regulated production numbers,



LEFT: Cups and mugs – or rather their handles – were a surprising source of controversy in wartime Britain MIRRORPIX/ALAMY

RIGHT: Known for prestige vases and jardinières, Doulton & Co of London was the first English factory to establish an art pottery studio. However, it also turned production over to the war effort. This strictly functional seven-pint earthenware jar contained anti-gas ointment to counteract the effects of mustard gas and other vesicants. Most seem to be dated 1943 (though this one is marked '2/44') and white versions were produced through the 1950s. Not too rare, £55

BELOW: Still in use, albeit with a strictly unrationed slice of lemon cake! One of the era's most iconic designs is Wood's Ware, the most familiar being green Beryl ware. There is surprisingly little research on this mass-produced design and while it is associated with post-war Britain, archive newspapers reveal that the design was being advertised in 1939. A village and church hall staple, it continued in production well into the 2000s and is still found in profusion. Larger items, such as tea and coffee pots, are rising in price at £30



keeping inefficient firms up to the mark, demanding they make more or fewer of a particular item if there was not enough or too many.

For example, supplies of plates and saucers proved more than adequate, but a Cup Committee, which made manufacturers report weekly production figures, found there was a particular shortage of more fragile drinking vessels. It set new target figures to fulfil demand and replace breakages, decreeing the production of teapots should increase from 6.1 million to 7.5 million. Meanwhile,

production of cups, mugs and beakers was to increase from 95 million to 145 million. It worked – the higher figures were met by March 1943.

Another possible solution to the drinking vessel shortage was the handleless cup. The Board of Trade had previously suggested the idea to hasten and economise production, but it had been frowned upon by the industry. Now, the manufacturers took up the idea – though this was partly because there were not enough handlemakers to keep pace with the increased output of the cupmakers! Ironically, despite the effort that went into their production, handleless cups did not sell well, but if the public refused to buy them, then the cup shortage was over. These items are rare now, reflecting their unpopularity at the time.

Shortages came and went for the rest of the war. Large plates or pudding bowls became scarce for a time, but using the experience of the cup crisis, the industry employed the same process of adaption to overcome the shortages. Yet, taking an overview of wartime British pottery statistics, the production of all forms of crockery fell. But this was as planned, to meet the needs of the war economy and not consumer demand.

Some restrictions were relaxed in 1945, but it took a couple of years before the Board of Trade even began to look at the idea of allowing crockery with a colour glaze. It would not be until August 1952, seven years after the war's end, before the restrictions were fully lifted.

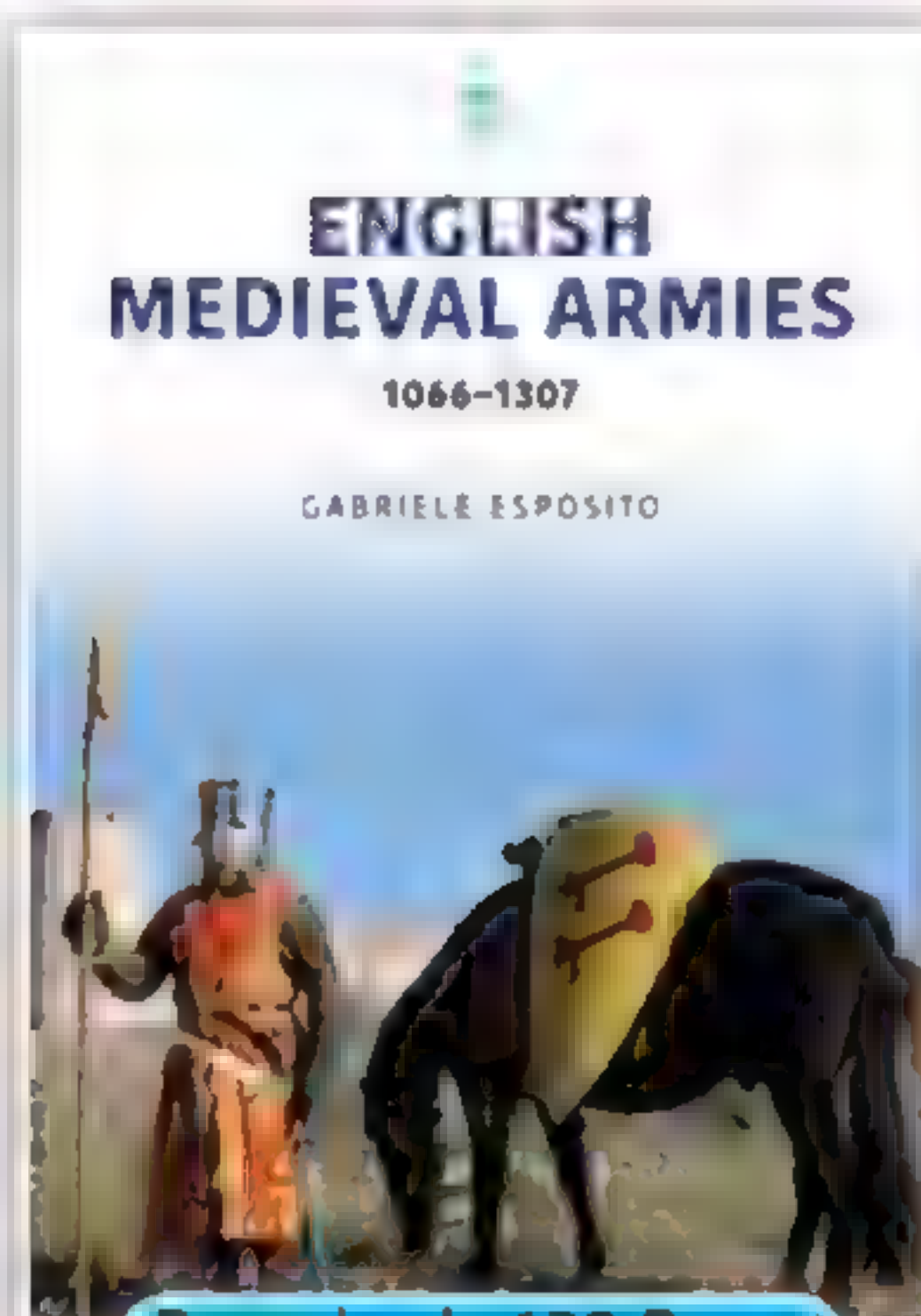
Nonetheless, despite the austere nature of late-war crockery, the nation's domestic requirements had been fulfilled to a satisfactory standard. Working together, the Board of Trade and pottery manufacturers also managed to fulfil their own needs, while at the same time releasing large numbers of workers and floorspace for the war industry. As the official historians of Britain's wartime civil industry and trade noted in 1952: "The pottery industry was a successful example of the Board of Trade's efforts to protect the essential wartime needs of the civilian and special users, such as government departments and catering establishments." **BW**



"It would not be until August 1952, seven years after the war's end, before the restrictions were fully lifted"

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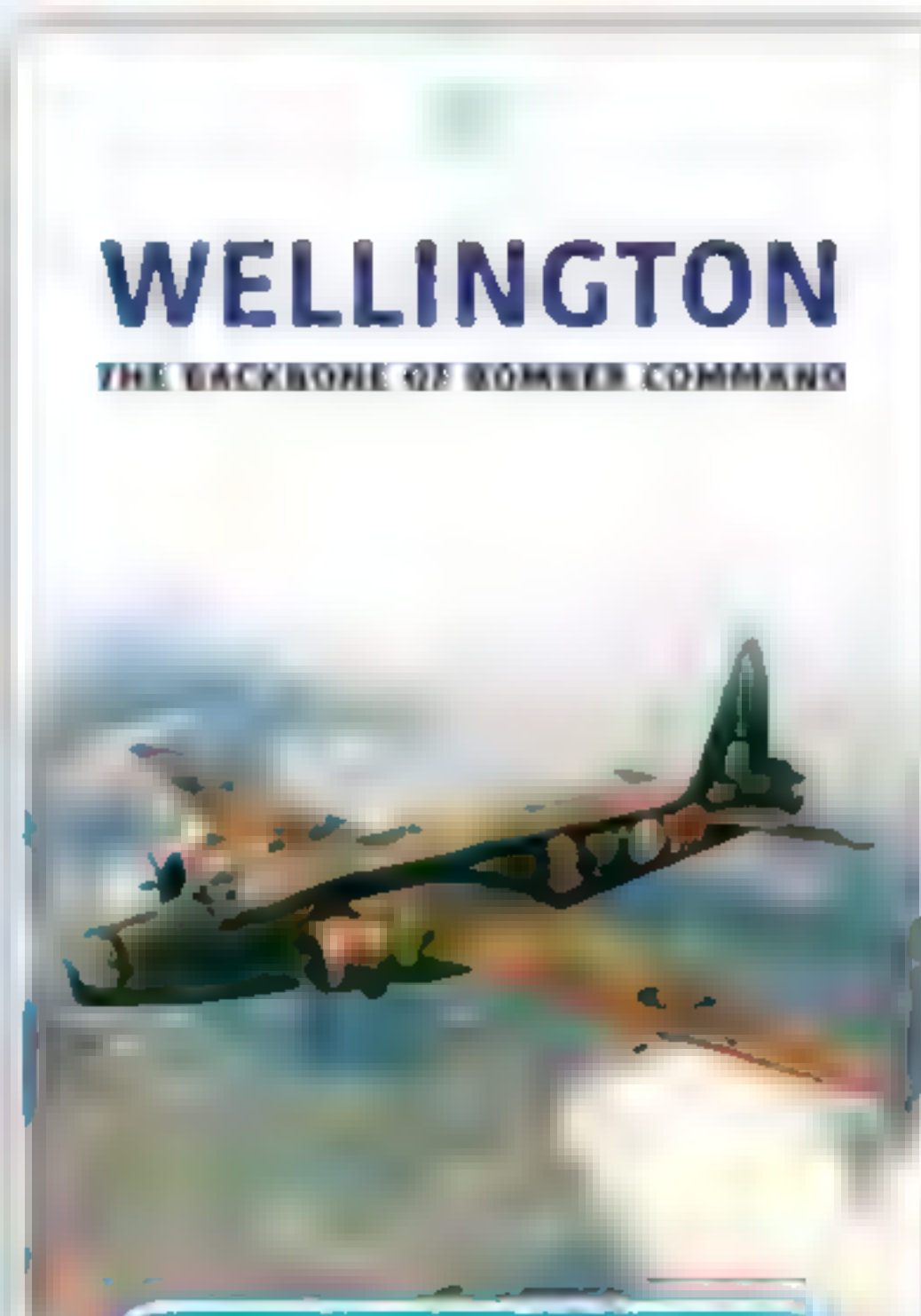
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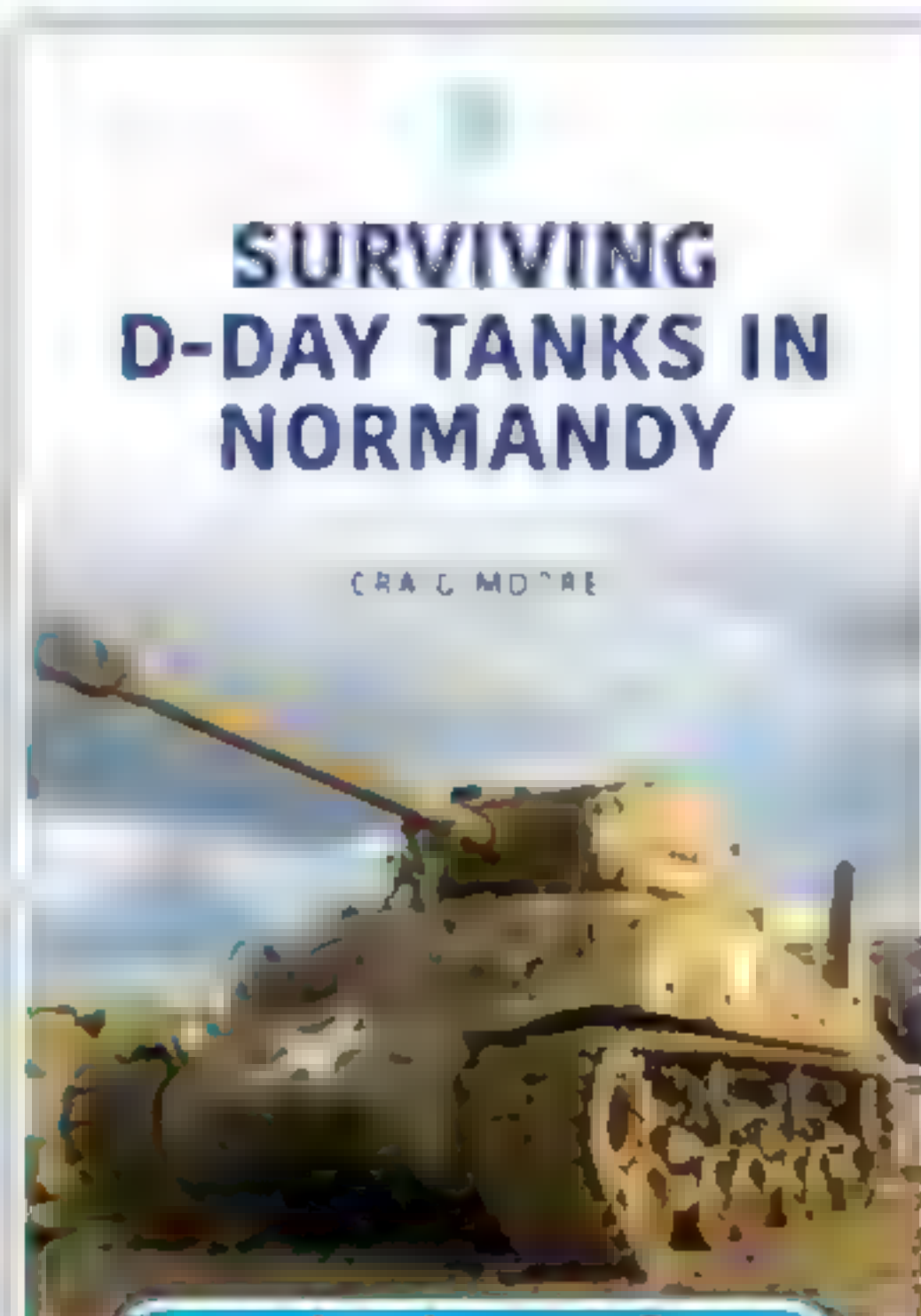
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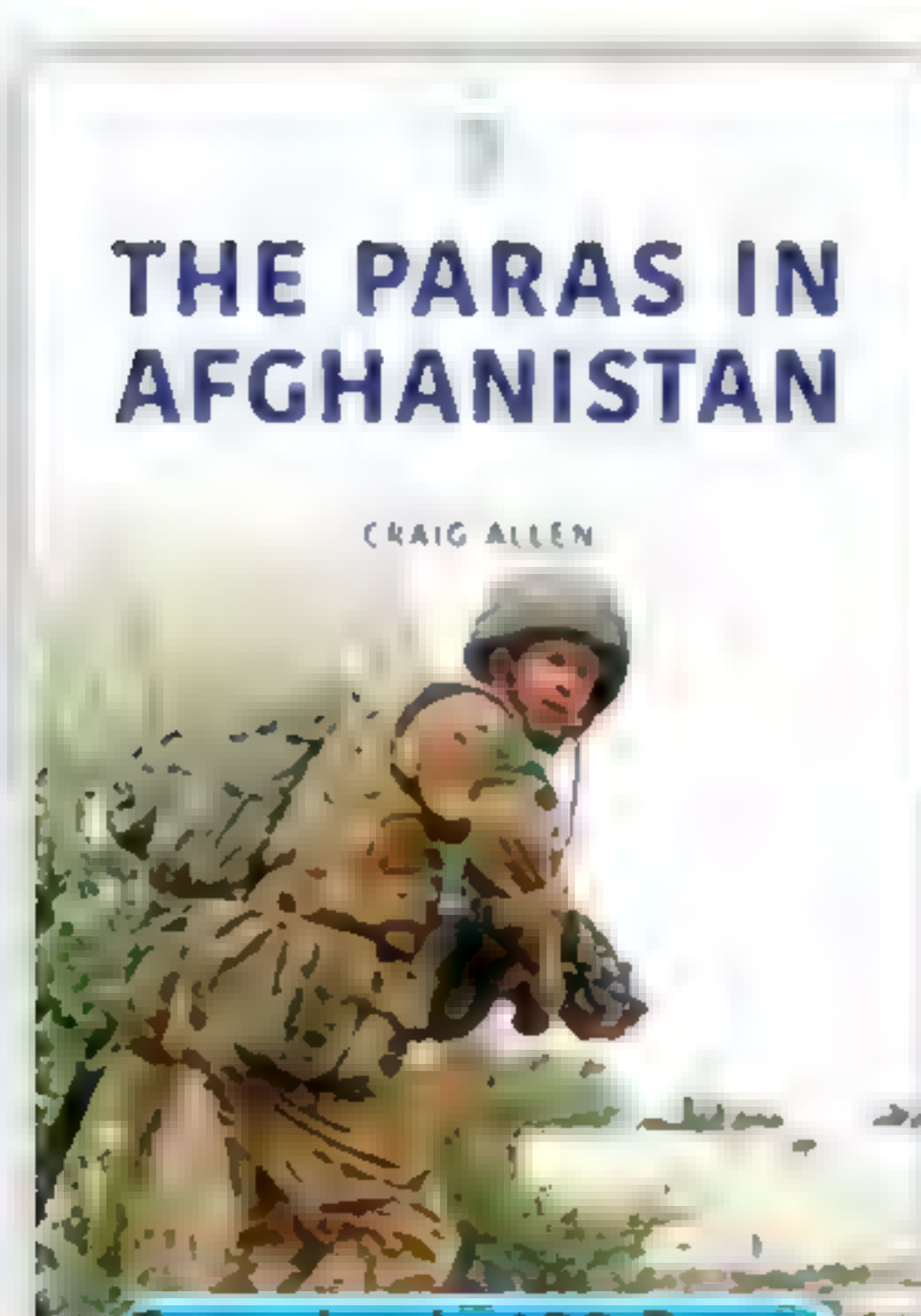
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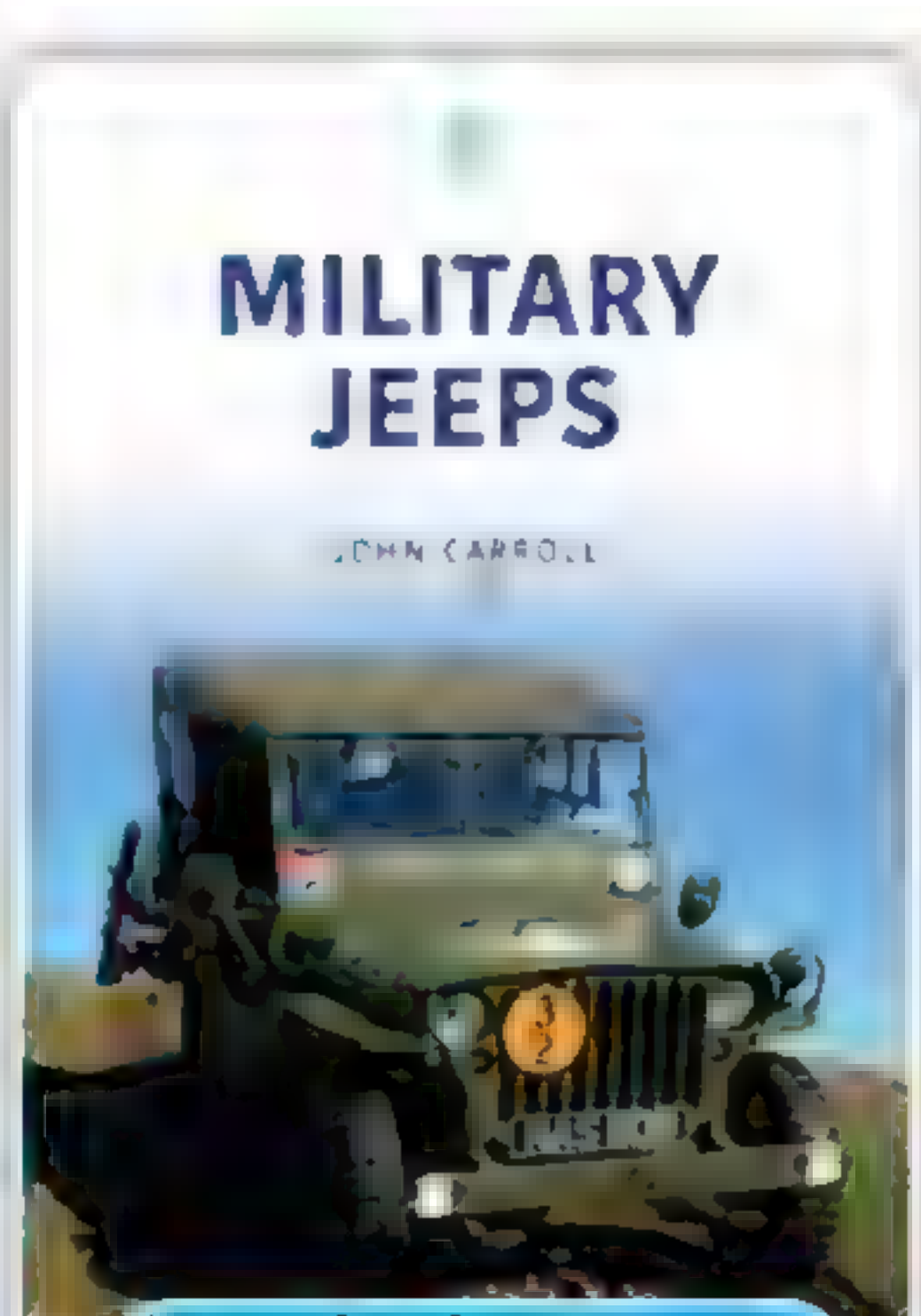
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By Lord Ashcroft

Few bomb disposal experts survive the detonation of an explosive they are trying to defuse. Fewer still write vividly about their experience, including providing precise details on what was so nearly the final moments of their life. Jack Easton achieved both feats and furthermore recovered so well from the horrendous injuries that he received in the blast that he eventually lived until he was nearly 90 years old.

Jack Maynard Cholmondeley Easton was born on May 28, 1906, in Maidenhead, Berkshire. He was the son of Percy Easton, a solicitor and hotelier, and his wife Kathleen. After being educated at Pangbourne College in Berkshire, Jack, like his father before him, worked as a solicitor.

In September 1940, a year into World War Two, he joined the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, initially at the rank of Probationary Temporary Sub Lieutenant at HMS *Vernon*, the naval shore establishment in Portsmouth. During the war, *Vernon* had taken on responsibility for mine disposal

and developing mine countermeasures, while Easton himself trained in naval ordnance disposal. At the height of the Blitz, the Luftwaffe's parachute mines were dropped in increasingly large numbers. Being higher capacity devices with thinner cases, the mines had a greater blast effect than an equivalent-sized bomb.

A huge tonnage of bombs and mines fell on the East End of London, one of the latter falling on a street in Hoxton on October 17, 1940. Amid fears the device would explode, local residents were evacuated.

Hoxton call-out

By this point serving in the rank of sub lieutenant, Jack and his assistant, Ordinary Seaman Bennett Southwell, were called to deal with the Hoxton parachute mine. They walked through empty, slate-strewn streets to the place where the mine had crashed through the roof of a house and was hanging suspended from a hole in the ceiling. It was in a precarious position, with the

nose of the device only some six inches off the floor.

Having assessed the situation, Easton realised it was too risky to try to move the device and instead decided to tackle the bomb where it was positioned. He asked Southwell to stay in the passage outside and hand him the necessary tools. However, Easton had only been working on the bomb for a minute, when it slipped and there was the sound of falling brickwork. Easton then heard the whirring of the bomb mechanism and he knew he only had some 12 seconds to get clear.

He shouted for Southwell to run and both men fled in different directions. Easton had just managed to reach a nearby surface air raid shelter, behind which he took cover, when the device detonated with incredible force. He was immediately knocked unconscious and, when he came to, was buried beneath rubble.

Rescuers eventually found him, dug him out of the debris and took him to hospital, where he was treated for a fractured spine,

“Easton then heard the whirring of the bomb mechanism, and he knew he only had some 12 seconds to get away”



Winston Churchill visiting London's bomb-damaged East End in September 1940 OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

skull and pelvis, as well as two broken legs. Bennett Southwell, the son of a railway porter who had worked as a gardener before the war, was killed in the blast. Aged 27, he was married with a young son.

Easton, who was also married with a daughter at the time of the incident, later wrote vividly about the incident in a chapter for the 1950 publication, *Wavy Navy*. In it, he captured the sense of loneliness and anticipation that all bomb disposal personnel face as they take what they term "the long walk" to deal with a device: "The tenant of the house, a bit excited and self-important, described what he believed to be the position and size of the mine. Then, supplied with all available information, the rating and I set off down the drab street.

"Those solitary walks towards the location of a mine always reminded me of the last scenes in the pictures of Charlie Chaplin. I had the feeling that a vast audience was watching the way I walked. It has been the last scene for several men I knew, though such morbid thoughts were absent that day. I was looking for the house described."

"Exactly 12 seconds to live"

Easton also described the tense minute or so as he struggled to defuse the mine, and provided a moving first-hand account of how it felt to be buried alive: "The fuze was clear of obstructions, but when I attempted to fit the misnamed safety horns, I discovered that the fuze had been damaged, probably as the bomb [mine] crashed through the house.

"The horns would not go into their place. I handed the attachment back to the rating as useless and took the tools for unscrewing the keep ring. The damage to this had jammed it, and although I exerted as much effort as I could, it would not turn. I had been working to detach the ring for perhaps a minute when the bomb slipped in front of me. There was a sound of falling brickwork as the chimney pot overhead collapsed, and I heard the whirr of the bomb mechanism. Unless I got clear, I had exactly 12 seconds to live.

"On such work, one had to plan ahead. When I discovered that the door could not be opened without disturbing the mine, I had decided on a sequence of movements if the mechanism did become active. Now, to the stimulant of the whirring sound, I grasped and pulled open the door against the weight of the planks, for now it no longer mattered if the mine were disturbed and I ran.

"I was through the hall in two leaps. As I emerged from the doorway, I saw my rating running down the street to what



A Heinkel over the East End. The Borough of Hackney lies out of shot just off the top left-hand corner, so had this bomber maintained the track shown, it may well have overflown Hoxton ULLSTEINBILD/TOFFOTO

He 111 bombers could carry two 1,000kg parachute mines, designed for blast effect – they were more damaging than an equivalent-sized bomb CHRIS GOSS



"I had no time to use distance for safety and ran across the roadway to a surface air raid shelter... I flung myself tight against it, face down to the ground"

he, poor devil, thought was safety. I had no time to use distance for safety and ran across the roadway to a surface air raid shelter opposite where I was. It was a red brick and concrete-roofed structure. I reached it and flung myself on its far side, its bulk between me and the house I had just left. I flung myself tight against it, face down to the ground.

"I heard no explosion. It has since been explained to me that if you are near enough to an explosion of such force, unconsciousness is upon you before any sound it makes reaches you, which is a merciful thing. I was blinded by the flash that comes split seconds before the explosion, but that was all I experienced. I do not know what time passed before I became conscious. When I did, I knew I was buried deep beneath bricks and mortar and was being suffocated. My head

was between my legs, and I guessed my back was broken, but could not move an inch. I was held, imbedded.

"Men dug me out eventually. To this day I do not know how long I spent in my grave. Most of the time I was unconscious. The conscious moments are of horror and utter helplessness. Being buried alive is certainly a good example of a living hell, and in the war years to come after 1940 the brave men, women and children of London and all of the other cities and towns, and villages of Britain not only have my sympathies, but some – those who had been buried alive – had my prayers. I really knew the physical and mental torture they endured.

"My rating [Southwell] was killed. He was beheaded by the blast. The mine destroyed six streets of working-class homes, and it was six weeks before his

body was found among the rubble. He was a brave man and left behind a brave widow."

Identical awards

On January 23, 1941, while lying in hospital and recovering from his injuries, the nurses told Easton that they should all listen to the 6pm news. Easton's GC and Southwell's posthumous identical award were announced for "great gallantry and undaunted devotion to duty." Hospital staff then proceeded to produce two cases of champagne that they had stored under his bed and the celebrations went on long into the evening.

Jack Easton spent a year with his back in plaster, but, eventually made a good recovery and returned to work. He received his decoration from King George VI at an investiture at Buckingham Palace on September 23, 1941. Southwell's widow, Marion, received her husband's posthumous award on the same day.

In another incident, Easton successfully defused a parachute mine that had fallen through the roof of the Russell Hotel in central London. The owner was so thrilled that his business had been saved that he wrote Easton a cheque for £140 – a huge amount at that time – and said that he and his family could have Sunday lunch at the hotel for life. But when Easton repeated the story to his commanding officer, he tore up the cheque and refused to allow him to take up the lunch offer. "We do this for honour, not for money," Easton was told firmly.

By the latter stages of the war, Easton, by then a Temporary Lieutenant, skippered

Devastation came to Hoxton at least once more, when the Paint Factory on Downham Road and the surrounding area were hit by a V2 in January 1945 MIRRORPIX/ALAMY



minesweepers. During the D-Day landings, he was leading a flotilla when a sea mine exploded under his ship. However, he once again survived and went on to lead a long and full life after the war.

Easton returned to work as a solicitor in his grandfather's law firm of William Easton & Sons. Together with his second wife, Joan Bartman, he lived for many years in Hampshire. He died on December 1, 1994, in Chichester, West Sussex, aged 88. He was cremated and his ashes were scattered in the Garden of Remembrance at Chichester Crematorium.

I am the proud custodian of the Southwell GC. But I chose Easton as the subject of this month's *Hero of the Month* because he had left such a vivid account of events on that day in October 1940. In no way does

this detract from my admiration of the rating's equal gallantry displayed on the same occasion.

My respect for what I refer to as the "cold courage" of bomb disposal experts is immense, all the more so after attending a full day's training course in the spring of 2010 with 621 EOD Squadron, part of 11 EOD Regiment, at Merville Barracks, near Colchester, Essex. Experienced bomb disposal officers provided me with a fascinating insight into the pressures that they and their men work under when trying to detonate bombs and IEDs. It was a day that I shall never forget, being exciting and terrifying in equal measure. It certainly made me appreciate the courage of men like Jack Easton and Bennett Southwell all the more. **BW**

'Luftmines' presented a challenge to bomb disposal teams, such as this example dropped on Glasgow in March 1941 OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH



GEORGE CROSS HEROES



Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is a businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. His book *George Cross Heroes* was published in 2010 and is available in hardback and paperback. For more information, visit

georgecrossheroes.com. Lord Ashcroft's VC and GC collection is on public display at the Imperial War Museum, London. For more information, visit iwm.org.uk/heroes and details about his VC collection may be found at lordashcroftmedals.com. For more information on Lord Ashcroft's work, visit lordashcroft.com. For Lord Ashcroft's work on gallantry, visit lordashcroftonbravery.com. Follow him on Twitter and/or Facebook @LordAshcroft





Military History with Pete and Gary

No.16

After recording a recent podcast, Gary and I took a stroll to visit the grave of George Walters VC in the East End Road Cemetery in sunny East Finchley. Walters, who had no connections with the East Finchley area of London, was born some 50 miles away on September 15, 1829 in Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire. He was the third of seven children born to James and Jane Walters, who had the pleasure of running a local pub.

Walters joined the 49th (Northamptonshire) Regiment of Foot in 1848 and (unlike Gary!) seems to have been a decent soldier as he reached the rank of sergeant within six years.

The other main figure in this story is Brigadier-General Henry Adams, who was commissioned as an ensign into the 12th (East Suffolk) Regiment of Foot on July 31, 1823. Later, he was colonel of the 18th Regiment of Foot from 1840-44, after which he had been in command of the 49th Foot. During the Crimean War he was placed in command of the 2nd Brigade in the 2nd Division, and at the Battle of Inkerman on November 5, 1854, he was given the responsibility of defending a key position, the 'Sandbag Battery', against heavy odds during the early fighting on a misty morning.

Walters and Adams' joint moment of destiny occurred as the 49th Foot was among the force holding the battery position. In the desperate, confused fighting, Adams was wounded in the ankle and had his horse killed under him. The stricken general looked to be doomed as Russian infantry were fast approaching. Then Walters leapt into action, charging forward and fending off with his bayonet the Russians who had begun to surround Adams. He then carried him back to the lines.

The Battle of Inkerman was a significant Anglo-French victory, despite

them being heavily outnumbered by the Russians and the prevailing mist that shrouded the battlefield. Sadly, Walters' gallantry was all for nothing, as the relatively trivial wound became badly infected and General Adams died a week later in Scutari hospital.

George Walters left the army in January 1857, and became a policeman with the Metropolitan force. When Queen Victoria founded the Victoria Cross, the *London Gazette* published the Royal Warrant for the first awards to great acclaim on February 24, 1857. There was then a huge parade in Hyde Park at which Walters was the 51st man to receive the new award. About 12 VCs were awarded for various individual acts of heroism and gallantry at Inkerman.

Walters did not stay with the police long and left under somewhat of a cloud; little is known of his subsequent life. He died in Marylebone on June 3, 1872 from what was then described as a 'wasting disease'. He was buried in an unmarked pauper's grave in East Finchley.

However, his old regiment, rebadged as the Royal Berkshire Regiment, later completed the research to establish his burial site at Plot 55 of Zone E10, and then in 1998 paid for a new gravestone engraved with the China dragon insignia of the Royal Berkshire Regiment and the Victoria Cross.

Sometimes it seems the British care more for heroes in death than when alive.

Peter Hart and Gary Bain's long-running 'Pete and Gary's Military History' weekly podcast is available via podcast services. Follow Pete and Gary on Twitter: @HartMilitary



Next Month

August 2023, Issue 196

Inside Your Magazine

On sale July 27

Britain at War follows British forces from Gibraltar to Malta, examining the vital role of the Mediterranean in World War Two. We learn how the RAF's flying boats based beneath the Rock of Gibraltar became the protectors of the all-important strait facilitating access to the sea, and delve deeper into Gib's defences. There's also a profile of the great 'fighting' admiral, James Somerville, who faced "one of the most disagreeable and difficult tasks that a British admiral has ever been faced with" as he turned his guns on his allies. And, in an exclusive, we chart a tale of survival with a Beaufighter pilot's first-hand account of a fateful raid in the Aegean – a perspective unknown until its discovery in an attic clear out.

In addition, Christopher Joll sheds light on the history of a British icon: the Royal Hospital Chelsea and its scarlet-clad pensioners, and, we examine a Home Guard icon.

Plus

News, Lord Ashcroft's Hero of the Month, reviews and more



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